

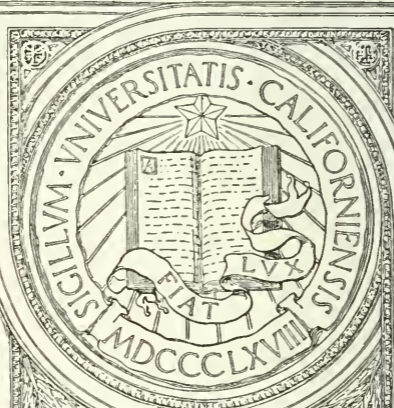
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BILLOW AND THE ROCK.

A TALE.

BY

HARRIET MARTINEAU.

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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER	Page
I. Lord and Lady Carse	9
II. The Turbulent	19
III. The Wrong Journey	27
IV. Newspapers	36
V. Cross-Roads and Short Seas	45
VI. The Steadfast	57
VII. The Roving of the Restless	68
VIII. The Waiting of the Wise	80
IX. The Cove	94
X. Which Refuge?	102
XI. Folding the Flock	114
XII. The Steward on his Rounds	131
XIII. True Solitude	141
XIV. Helsa's News	155
XV. Annie's News	166
XVI. Timely Evasion	174
XVII. The Lamp burns	181
XVIII. Openings	191
XIX. Free at Last!	208

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THE BILLOW AND THE ROCK.

CHAPTER I.

LORD AND LADY CARSE.

SCOTLAND was a strange and uncomfortable country to live in a hundred years ago. Strange beyond measure its state of society appears to us when we consider, not only that it was called a Christian country, but that the people had shown that they really did care very much for their religion, and were bent upon worshipping God according to their conscience and true belief. While earnest in their religion, their state of society was yet very wicked: a thing which usually happens when a whole people are passing from one way of living and being governed to another. Scotland had not long been united with England. While the wisest of the nation saw that the only hope for the country was in being governed by the same king and parliament as the English, many of the most powerful men wished not to be governed at all, but to be altogether despotic over their dependents and neighbours, and to have their own way in everything. These lords and gentlemen did such violent things as are never heard of now in civilized countries;

and when their inferiors had any strong desire or passion, they followed the example of the great men, so that travelling was dangerous; citizens did not feel themselves safe in their own houses if they had reason to believe they had enemies; few had any trust in the protection of the law; and stories of fighting and murder were familiar to children living in the heart of cities.

Children, however, had less liberty then than in our time. The more self-will there was in grown people, the more strictly were the children kept in order, not only because the uppermost idea of every one in authority was that he would be obeyed, but because it would not do to let little people see the mischief that was going on abroad. So, while boys had their hair powdered, and wore long coats and waistcoats, and little knee-breeches, and girls were laced tight in stays all stiff with whalebone, they were trained to manners more formal than are ever seen now.

One autumn afternoon, a party was expected at the house of Lord Carse in Edinburgh; a handsome house in a very odd situation according to our modern notions. It was at the bottom of a narrow lane of houses—that sort of lane called a Wynd in Scotch cities. It had a court-yard in front. It was necessary to have a court-yard to a good house in a street too narrow for carriages. Visitors must come in sedan-chairs, and there must be some place, aside from the street, where the chairs and chairmen could wait for the guests. This old fashioned house had sitting-rooms on the ground-floor, and on the sills of the windows were flower-pots, in which on this occasion some asters and other autumn flowers were growing.

Within the largest sitting-room was collected a formal group, awaiting the arrival of visitors. Lord Carse's sister, Lady Rachel Ballino, was there, surrounded by her nephews and nieces. As they came in, one after another, dressed for company, and made their bow or curtsy at the door, their aunt gave them permission to sit down till the arrival of the first guest, after which time it would be a matter of course that they should stand. Miss Janet and her brothers sat down on their low stools, at some distance from each other; but little Miss Flora had no notion of submitting to their restraints at her early age, and she scrambled up the window-seat to look abroad as far as she could, which was through the high iron gates to the tall houses on the other side the Wynd.

Lady Rachel saw the boys and Janet looking at each other with smiles, and this turned her attention to the child in the window, who was nodding her little curly head very energetically to somebody outside.

"Come down, Flora," said her aunt.

But Flora was too busy, nodding, to hear that she was spoken to.

"Flora, come down. Why are you nodding in that way?"

"Lady nods," said Flora.

Lady Rachel rose deliberately from her seat, and approached the window, turning pale as she went. After a single glance into the court-yard, she sank on a chair, and desired her nephew Orme to ring the bell twice. Orme, who saw that something was the matter, rang so vigorously as to bring the butler in immediately.

"John, you see," said the pale lips of Lady

Rachel, while she pointed, with a trembling finger, to the court-yard.

“Yes, my Lady, the doors are fastened.”

“And Lord Carse not home yet?”

“No, my Lady. I think perhaps he is somewhere near, and cannot get home.”

John looked irresolutely towards the child in the window. Once more Flora was desired to come down; and once more she only replied,

“Lady nods at me.”

Janet was going towards the window to enforce her aunt's orders; but she was desired to keep her seat; and John quickly took up Miss Flora in his arms, and set her down at her aunt's knee. The child cried, and struggled, said she would see the lady, and must infallibly have been dismissed to the nursery, but that her eye was caught, and her mind presently engaged by Lady Rachel's painted fan, on which there was a burning mountain, and a blue sea, and a shepherdess and her lamb—all very gay. Flora was allowed to have the fan in her own hands—a very rare favour. But presently she left off telling her aunt what she saw upon it, dropped it, and clapped her hands, saying, as she looked at the window, “Lady nods at me.”

“It is Mama,” cried the elder ones, starting to their feet, as the lady thrust her face through the flowers, and close to the window-pane.

“Go to the nursery, children,” said Lady Rachel, making an effort to rise. “I will send for you presently.” The elder ones appeared glad to escape; and they carried with them the struggling Flora.

Lady Rachel threw up the sash, crossed her arms, and said, in the most formal manner,

“What do you want, Lady Carse?”

“I want my children.”

“You cannot have them, as you well know. It is too late. I pity you; but it is too late.”

“I will see my children. I will come home and live. I will make that tyrant repent setting up any one in my place at home. I have it in my power to ruin him. I . . .”

“Abstain from threats,” said Lady Rachel, shutting the window, and fastening the sash.

Lady Carse doubled her fist, as if about to dash in a pane; but the iron gates behind her creaked on their hinges, and she turned her head. A chair was entering, on each side of which walked a footman, whose livery Lady Carse well knew. Her handsome face, red before, was now more flushed. She put her mouth close to the window, and said, “If it had been anybody but Lovat you would not have been rid of me this evening. I would have stood among the chairmen till midnight, for the chance of getting in. Be sure I shall, to-morrow, or some day. But now, I am off.”

She darted past the chair, her face turned away, just as Lord Lovat was issuing from it.

“Ho! ho!” cried he, in a loud and mocking tone. “Ho there! my Lady Carse! A word with you!” But she ran up the Wynd as fast as she could go.

“You should not look so white upon it,” Lord Lovat observed to Lady Rachel, as soon as the door was shut. “Why do you let her see her power over you?”

“God knows!” replied Lady Rachel. “But it is not her threats alone that make us nervous. It is the being incessantly subject . . .”

She cleared her throat ; but she could not go on.

Lord Lovat swore that he would not submit to be tormented by a virago in this way. If Lady Carse were his wife . . .

“ Well ! what would you do ? ” asked Lady Rachel.

“ I would get rid of her. I tell your brother so. I would get rid of her in one way, if she threatened to get rid of me in another. She may have learned from her father how to put her enemies out of the way.”

Lady Rachel grew paler than ever. Lord Lovat went on.

“ Her father carried pistols in the streets of Edinburgh ; and so may she. Her father was hanged for it ; and it is my belief that she would have no objection to that end, if she could have her revenge first. Ay ! you wonder why I say such things to you, frightened as you are already. I do it that you may not infuse any weakness into your brother’s purposes, if he should think fit to rid the town of her one of these days. Come, come ! I did not say rid the world of her.”

“ Merciful Heaven ! no ! ”

“ There are places, you know, where troublesome people have no means of doing mischief. I could point out such a place presently, if I were asked—a place where she might be as safe as under lock and key, without the trouble and risk of confining her, and having to consider the law.”

“ You do not mean a prison, then.”

“ No. She has not yet done anything to make it easy to put her in prison for life ; and anything short of that would be more risk than comfort. If Carse gives me authority, I will dispose of her

where she can be free to rove like the wild goats. If she should take a fancy to jump down a precipice, or drown herself, that is her own affair, you know."

The door opened for the entrance of company. Lord Lovat whispered once more,

"Only this. If Carse thinks of giving the case into my hands, don't you oppose it. I will not touch her life, I swear to you."

Lady Rachel knew, like the rest of the world, that Lord Lovat's swearing went for no more than any of his other engagements. Though she would have given all she had in the world to be freed from the terror of Lady Carse, and to hope that the children might forget their unhappy mother, she shrank from the idea of putting any person into the hands of the hard, and mocking, and plotting Lord Lovat. As for the legality of doing anything at all to Lady Carse while she did not herself break the law, that was a consideration which no more occurred to Lady Rachel than to the violent Lord Lovat himself.

Lady Rachel was exerting herself to entertain her guests, and had sent for the children, when, to her inexplicable relief, the butler brought her the news that Lord Carse and his son Willie were home, and would appear with all speed. They had been detained two hours in a tavern, John said.

"In a tavern?"

"Yes, my Lady. Could not get out. Did not wish to collect more people, to cause a mob. It is all right now, my Lady."

When Lord Carse entered, he made formal apologies to his guests first, and his sister afterwards,

for his late appearance. He had been delayed by an affair of importance on his way home. His rigid countenance was somewhat paler than usual, and his manner more dictatorial. His hard and unwavering voice was heard all the evening, prosing and explaining. The only tokens of feeling were when he spoke to his eldest son Willie, who was spiritless, and, as the close observer saw, tearful; and when he took little Flora in his arms, and stroked her shining hair, and asked her if she had been walking with her nurse.

Flora did not answer. She was anxiously watching Lady Rachel's countenance. Her papa bade her look at him and answer his question. She did so, after glancing at her aunt, and saying eagerly, in a loud whisper,

"I am not going to say anything about the lady that came to the window, and nodded at me."

It did not mend the matter that her sister and brothers all said at once, in a loud whisper, "Hush! Flora."

Her father sat her down hastily. Lord Carse's domestic troubles were pretty well known throughout Edinburgh; and the company settled it in their own minds that there had been a scene this afternoon.

When they were gone, Lord Carse gave his sister his advice not to instruct any very young child in any part to be acted. He assured her that very young children have not the discretion of grown people, and gave it as his opinion that when the simplicity, which is extremely agreeable by the domestic fireside, becomes troublesome or dangerous in society, the child is better disposed of in the nursery.

Lady Rachel meekly submitted; only observing what a singular and painful case was that of these children, who had to be so early trained to avoid the very mention of their mother. She believed her brother to be the most religious man she had ever known; yet she now heard him mutter oaths so terrible that they made her blood run cold.

“Brother! my dear brother,” she expostulated.

“I’ll tell you what she has done,” he said, from behind his set teeth. “She has taken a lodging in this very Wynd, directly opposite my gates. Not a child, not a servant, not a dog or cat can leave my house without coming under her eye. She will be speaking to the children out of her window.”

“She will be nodding at Flora from the courtyard as often as you are out,” cried Lady Rachel. “And if she should shoot you from her window, brother.”

“She hints that she will; and there are many things more unlikely, considering (as she herself says) whose daughter she is.—But, no,” he continued, seeing the dreadful alarm into which his sister was thrown. “This will not be her method of revenge. There is another that pleases her better, because she suspects that I dread it more.—You know what I mean?”

“Political secrets?” Lady Rachel whispered—not in Flora’s kind of whisper, but quite into her brother’s ear.

He nodded assent, and then he gravely informed her that his acquaintance, Duncan Forbes, had sent a particular request to see him in the morning. He should go, he said. It would not do to refuse waiting on the President of the Court of Session,

as he was known to be in Edinburgh. But he wished he was a hundred miles off, if he was to hear a Hanoverian lecture from a man so good natured, and so dignified by his office, that he must always have his own way.

Lady Rachel went to bed very miserable this night. She wished that Lady Carse and King George, and all the House of Brunswick had never existed; or that Prince Charlie, or some of the exiled royal family, would come over at once and take possession of the kingdom, that her brother and his friends might no longer be compelled to live in a state of suspicion and dread—every day planning to bring in a new king, and every day obliged to appear satisfied with the one they had; their secret, or some part of it, being all the while at the mercy of a violent woman who hated them all.

CHAPTER II.

THE TURBULENT.

WHEN Lord Carse issued from his own house the next morning to visit the President, he had his daughter Janet by his side, and John behind him. He took Janet in the hope that her presence, while it would be no impediment to any properly legal business, would secure him from any political conversation being introduced ; and there was no need of any apology for her visit, as the President usually asked why he had not the pleasure of seeing her, if her father went alone. Duncan Forbes's good nature to all young people was known to everybody ; but he declared himself an admirer of Janet above all others ; and Janet never felt herself of so much consequence as in the President's house. John went as an escort to his young lady on her return.

Janet felt her father's arm twitch as they issued from their gates ; and, looking up to see why, she saw that his face was twitching too. She did not know how near her mother was, nor that her father and John had their ears on the stretch for a hail from the voice they dreaded above all others in the world. But nothing was seen or heard of Lady Carse ; and when they turned out of the Wynd Lord Carse resumed his usual air and step of formal importance ; and Janet held up her head, and tried to take steps as long as his.

All was right about her going to the President's. He kissed her forehead, and praised her father for bringing her, and picked out for her the prettiest flowers from a bouquet before he sat down to business; and then he rose again, and provided her with a portfolio of prints to amuse herself with; and even then he did not forget her, but glanced aside several times, to explain the subject of some print, or to draw her attention to some beauty in the one she was looking at.

"My dear Lord," said he, "I have taken a liberty with your time; but I want your opinion on a scheme I have drawn out at length for Government, for preventing and punishing the use of tea among the common people."

"Very good, very good!" observed Lord Carse, greatly relieved about the reasons for his being sent for. "It is high time, if our agriculture is to be preserved, that the use of malt should be promoted to the utmost by those in power."

"I am sure of it," said the President. "Things have got to such a pass, that in towns the meanest people have tea at the morning's meal, to the discontinuance of the ale which ought to be their diet; and poor women drink this drug also in the afternoons, to the exclusion of the twopenny."

"It is very bad; very unpatriotic; very immoral," declared Lord Carse. "Such people must be dealt with outright."

The President put on his spectacles, and opened his papers to explain his plan—that plan, which it now appears almost incredible should have come from a man so wise, so liberal, so kind-hearted as Duncan Forbes. He showed how he would draw the line between those who ought and those who ought

not to be permitted to drink tea ; how each was to be described, and how, when any one was suspected of taking tea when he ought to drink beer, he was to tell on oath what his income was, that it might be judged whether he could pay the extremely high duty on tea which the plan would impose. Houses might be visited, and cupboards and cellars searched, at all hours, in cases of suspicion.

“These provisions are pretty severe,” the President himself observed. “But . . .”

“But not more than is necessary,” declared Lord Carse. “I should say they are too mild. If our agriculture is not supported, if the malt-tax falls off, what is to become of us?”

And he sighed deeply.

“If we find this scheme work well as far as it goes,” observed the President, cheerfully, “we can easily render it as much more stringent as occasion may require. And now, what can Miss Janet tell us on this subject? Can she give information of any tea being drunk in the nursery at home?”

“Oh ! to be sure,” said Janet. “Nurse often lets me have some with her ; and Katie fills Flora’s doll’s teapot out of her own, almost every afternoon.”

“Bless my soul !” cried Lord Carse, starting from his seat in consternation. “My servants drink tea in my house ! Off they shall go—every one of them who does it.

“O ! papa ! No—pray papa !” implored Janet. “They will say I sent them away. O ! I wish nobody had asked me anything about it.”

“It was my doing,” said the President. “My dear Lord, I make it my request that your servants may be forgiven.”

Lord Carse bowed his acquiescence; but he shook his head, and looked very gloomy about such a thing happening in his house. The President agreed with him that it must not happen again, on pain of instant dismissal.

The President next invited Janet to the drawing-room to see a grey parrot, brought hither since her last visit—a very entertaining companion in the evenings, the President declared. He told Lord Carse that he would be back in three minutes; and so he was—with a lady on his arm; and that lady was—Lady Carse.

She was not flushed now, nor angry, nor forward. She was quiet and lady-like, while in the house of one of the most gentlemanly men of his time. If her husband had looked at her, he would have seen her so much like the woman he wooed and once dearly loved, that he might have somewhat changed his feelings towards her. But he went abruptly to the window when he discovered who she was; and nothing could make him turn his head. Perhaps he was aware how pale he was, and desired that she should not see it.

The President placed the lady in a chair, and then approached Lord Carse, and laid his hand on his shoulder, saying,

“You will forgive me when you know my reasons. I want you to join me in prevailing on this good lady to give up a design which I think imprudent—I will say, wrong.”

It was surprising; but Lady Carse for once bore quietly with somebody thinking her wrong. Whatever she might feel, she said nothing. The President went on.

“Lady Carse . . .”

He felt, as his hand lay on his friend's shoulder, that he winced, as if the very name stung him.

"Lady Carse," continued the President, "cannot be deterred by any account that can be given her of the perils and hardships of a journey to London. She declares her intention of going."

"I am no baby; I am no coward," declared the lady. "The coach would not have been set up, and it would not continue to go once a fortnight if the journey were not practicable; and where others go I can go."

"Of the dangers of the road, I tell this good lady," resumed the President, "she can judge as well as you or I, my Lord. But of the perils of the rest of her errand she must, I think, admit that we may be better judges."

"How can you let your Hanoverian prejudices seduce you into countenancing such a devil as that woman, and believing a word that she says?" muttered Lord Carse, in a hoarse voice.

"Why, my good friend," replied the President, "it does so vex my very heart every day to see how the ladies, whom I would fain honour for their discretion as much as I admire them for their other virtues, are wild on behalf of the Pretender, or eager for a desperate and treasonable war, that you must not wonder if I take pleasure in meeting with one who is loyal to her rightful sovereign. Loyal, I must suppose, at home, and in a quiet way; for she knows that I do not approve of her journey to London to see the minister."

"The minister!" faltered out Lord Carse.

He heard, or fancied he heard his wife laughing behind him.

"Come, now, my friends," said the President,

with a good-humoured seriousness, "let me tell you that the position of either of you is no joke. It is too serious for any lightness and for any passion. I do not want to hear a word about your grievances. I see quite enough. I see a lady driven from home, deprived of her children, and tormenting herself with thoughts of revenge because she has no other object. I see a gentleman who has been cruelly put to shame in his own house and in the public street, worn with anxiety about his innocent daughters, and with natural fears—inevitable fears, of the mischief that may be done to his character and fortunes by an ill use of the confidence he once gave to the wife of his bosom."

There was a suppressed groan from Lord Carse, and something like a titter from the lady. The President went on even more gravely.

"I know how easy it is for people to make each other wretched, and especially for you two to ruin each other. If I could but persuade you to sit down with me to a quiet discussion of a plan for living together or apart, abstaining from mutual injury . . ."

Lord Carse dissented audibly from their living together, and the lady from living apart.

"Why," remonstrated the President, "things cannot be worse than they are now. You make life a hell . . ."

"I am sure it is to me!" sighed Lord Carse.

"It is not yet so to me," said the lady. "I . . ."

"It is not!" thundered her husband, turning suddenly round upon her. "Then I will take care it shall be."

"For God's sake, hush!" exclaimed the President, shocked to the soul.

“Do your worst,” said the lady, rising. “We will try which has the most power. You know what ruin is.”

“Stop a moment,” said the President. “I don’t exactly like to have this quiet house of mine made a hell of. I cannot have you part, on these terms.”

But the lady had curtseyed and was gone.

For a minute or two nothing was said. Then a sort of scream was heard from upstairs.

“My Janet!” cried Lord Carse.

“I will go and see,” said the President. “Janet is my especial pet, you know.”

He immediately returned, smiling, and said,

“There is nothing amiss with Janet. Come and see.”

Janet was on her mother’s lap, her arms thrown round her neck, while the mother’s tears streamed over them both. “Can you resist this?” the President asked of Lord Carse. “Can you keep them apart after this?”

“I can,” he replied. “I will not permit her the devilish pleasure she wants—of making my own children my enemies.”

He was going to take Janet by force: but the President interfered, and said authoritatively to Lady Carse that she had better go: her time was not yet come. She must wait; and his advice was to wait patiently and harmlessly.

It could not have been believed how instantaneously a woman in such emotion could recover herself.

She put Janet off her knee. In an instant there were no more traces of tears, and her face was composed, and her manner hard.

“ Good bye, my dear,” she said to the weeping Janet. “ Don’t cry so, my dear. Keep your tears ; for you will have something more to cry for soon. I am going home, to pack my trunk for London. Have my friends any commands for London?”

And she looked round steadily upon the three faces.

The President was extremely grave when their eyes met ; but even his eye sank under hers. He offered his arm to conduct her down stairs, and took leave of her at the gate with a silent bow.

He met Lord Carse and Janet coming down stairs, and begged them to stay a-while, dreading perhaps a street encounter. But Lord Carse was bent on being gone immediately—had not another moment to spare.

CHAPTER III.

THE WRONG JOURNEY.

LADY CARSE and her maid Bessie—an elderly woman who had served her from her youth up, bearing with her temper for the sake of that family attachment which exists so strongly in Scotland,—were busy packing trunks this afternoon, when they were told that a gentleman must speak with Lady Carse below stairs.

“There will be no peace till we are off,” observed the lady to her maid. In answer to which Bessie only sighed deeply.

“I want you to attend me down stairs,” observed the lady. “But this provoking nonsense of yours, this crying about going a journey, has made you not fit to be seen. If any friend of my lord’s saw your red eyes, he would go and say that my own maid was on my lord’s side. I must go down alone.”

“Pray, Madam, let me attend you. The gentleman will not think of looking at me: and I will stand with my back to the light, and the room is dark.”

“No; your very voice is full of tears. Stay where you are.”

Lady Carse sailed into the room very grandly, not knowing whom she was to see. Nor was she any wiser when she did see him. He was muffled up, and wore a shawl tied over his mouth, and

kept his hat on; so that little space was left between hat, periwig, and comforter. He apologised for wearing his hat, and for keeping the lady standing—his business was short:—in the first place to show her Lord Carse's ring, which she would immediately recognise

She glanced at the ring, and knew it at once.

"On the warrant of this ring," continued the gentleman, "I come from your husband to require from you what you cannot refuse,—either as a wife, or consistently with your safety. You hold a document,—a letter from your husband, written to you in conjugal confidence five years ago, from London,—a letter. . ."

"You need not describe it further," said the lady. "It is my chief treasure, and not likely to escape my recollection. It is a letter from Lord Carse, containing treasonable expressions relating to the royal family."

"About the treason we might differ, Madam; but my business is, not to argue that, but to require of you to deliver up that paper to me, on this warrant," again producing the ring.

The lady laughed, and asked whether the gentleman was a fool or took her to be one, that he asked her to give up what she had just told him was the greatest treasure she had in the world,—her sure means of revenge upon her enemies.

"You will not?" asked the gentleman.

"I will not."

"Then hear what you have to expect, Madam. Hear it, and then take time to consider once more."

"I have no time to spare," she replied. "I start for London early in the morning; and my preparations are not complete."

“You must hear me, however,” said the gentleman. “If you do not yield, your husband will immediately and irrevocably put you to open shame.”

“He cannot,” she replied. “I have no shame: I have the advantage of him there.”

“You have, however, personal liberty at present. You have that to lose,—and life, Madam. You have that to lose.”

Lady Carse caught at the table, and leaned on it to support herself. It was not from fear about her liberty or life; but because there was a cruel tone in the utterance of the last words, which told her that it was Lord Lovat who was threatening her; and she *was* afraid of him.

“I have shaken you now,” said he. “Come: give me the letter.”

“It is not fear that shakes me,” she replied. “It is disgust. The disgust that some feel at reptiles I feel at you, my Lord Lovat.”

She quickly turned and left the room. When he followed, she had her foot on the stairs. He said aloud,

“You will repent, Madam. You will repent.”

“That is my own affair.”

“True, Madam: most true. I charge you to remember that you have yourself said that it is your own affair, if you find you have cause to repent.”

Lady Carse stood on the stairs till her visitor had closed the house-door behind him, struggled up to her chamber, and fainted on the threshold.

“This journey will never do, Madam,” said Bessie, as her mistress revived.

“It is the very thing for me,” protested the lady. “In twelve hours more, we shall have left

this town and my enemies behind us; and then I shall be happy."

Bessie sighed. Her mistress often talked of being happy; but nobody had ever yet seen her so.

"This fainting is nothing," said Lady Carse, rising from the bed. "It is only that my soul sickens when Lord Lovat comes near; and the visitor below was Lord Lovat."

"Mercy on us!" exclaimed Bessie. "What next?"

"Why, that we must get this lock turned," said her lady, kneeling on the lid of a trunk. "Now, try again. There it is! Give me the key. Get me a cup of tea, and then to bed with you! I have a letter to write. Call me at four, to a minute. Have you ordered two chairs, to save all risk?"

"Yes, Madam; and the landlord will see your things to the coach-office to-night."

Lady Carse had sealed her letter, and was winding up her watch, with her eyes fixed on the decaying fire, when she was startled by a knock at the house-door. Every body else was in bed. In a vague fear, she hastened to her chamber, and held the door in her hand, and listened while the landlord went down. There were two voices besides his; and there was a noise as of something heavy brought into the hall. When this was done, and the bolts and bars were again fastened, she went to the stairhead, and saw the landlord coming up with a letter in his hand. The letter was for her. It was heavy. Her trunks had come back from the coach-office. The London coach was gone.

The letter contained the money paid for the fare of Lady Carse and her maid to London, and explained that a person of importance having occa-

sion to go to London, with attendants, and it being necessary to use haste, the coach was compelled to start six hours earlier than usual; and Lady Carse would have the first choice of places next time;—that is in a fortnight.

Bessie had never seen her mistress in such a rage as now: and poor Bessie was never to see it again. At the first news, she was off her guard, and thanked Heaven that this dangerous journey was put off for a fortnight; and much might happen in that time. Her mistress turned round upon her, said it was not put off,—she would go on horseback alone,—she would go on foot,—she would crawl on her knees, sooner than give up. Bessie was silent, well knowing that none of these ways would or could be tried, and thankful that there was only this one coach to England. Enraged at her silence, her mistress declared that no one who was afraid to go to London was a proper servant for her, and turned her off upon the spot. She paid her wages to the weeping Bessie, and with the first light of morning, sent her from the house, herself closing the door behind her. She then went to bed, drawing the curtains close round it, remaining there all the next day, and refusing food.

In the evening, she wearily rose, and slowly dressed herself,—for the first time in her life without help. She was fretted and humbled at the little difficulties of her toilet, and secretly wished, many times, that Bessie would come back and offer her services, though she was resolved to appear not to accept them without a very humble apology from Bessie for her fears about London. At last, she was ready to go down to tea, dressed in a

wrapping-gown and slippers. When halfway down, she heard a step behind her, and looked round. A Highlander was just two stairs above her: another appeared at the foot of the flight; and more were in the hall. She knew the livery. It was Lovat's tartan.

They dragged her down stairs, and into her parlour, where she struggled so violently that she fell against the heavy table, and knocked out two teeth. They fastened down her arms by swathing her with a plaid, tied a cloth over her mouth, threw another over her head, and carried her to the door. In the street was a sedan-chair; and in the chair was a man who took her upon his knees, and held her fast. Still she struggled so desperately, that the chair rocked from side to side, and would have been thrown over; but that there were plenty of attendants running along by the side of it, who kept it upright.

This did not last very long. When they had got out of the streets, the chair stopped. The cloth was removed from her head; and she saw that they were on the Linlithgow road, that some horsemen were waiting, one of whom was on a very stout horse, which bore a pillion behind the saddle. To this person she was formally introduced, and told that he was Mr. Forster of Corsebonny. She knew Mr. Forster to be a gentleman of character; and that therefore her personal safety was secure in his hands. But her good opinion of him determined her to complain and appeal to him in a way which she believed no gentleman could resist. She did not think of making any outcry. The party was large; the road was unfrequented at night; and she dreaded being gagged. She therefore only spoke,—and that as calmly as she could.

“What does this mean, Mr. Forster? Where are you carrying me?”

“I know little of Lord Carse’s purposes, Madam; and less of the meaning of them probably than yourself.”

“My Lord Carse! Then I shall soon be among the dead. He will go through life with murder on his soul.”

“You wrong him, Madam. Your life is very safe.”

“No. I will not live to be the sport of my husband’s mercy. I tell you, Sir, I will not live.”

“Let me advise you to be silent, Madam. Whatever we have to say will be better said at the end of our stage, where I hope you will enjoy good rest, under my word that you shall not be molested.”

But the lady would not be silent. She declared very peremptorily her determination to destroy herself on the first opportunity; and no one who knew her temper could dispute the probability of her doing that, or any other act of passion. From bewailing herself, she went on to say things of her husband and Lord Lovat, and of her purposes in regard to them, which Mr. Forster felt that he and others ought not, for her own sake, to hear. He quickened his pace; but she complained of cramp in her side. He then halted,—whispered to two men who watched for his orders,—and had the poor lady again silenced by the cloth being tied over her mouth. She tried to drop off; but that only caused the strap which bound her to the rider to be buckled tighter. She found herself treated like a wayward child. When she could no longer make opposition, the pace of the party was quickened;

and it was not more than two hours past midnight when they reached a country-house which she knew to belong to an Edinburgh lawyer, a friend of her husband's.

Servants were up,—fires were burning,—supper was on the table. The lady was shown to a comfortable bed-room.

From thence she refused to come down. Mr. Forster and another gentleman of the party therefore visited her to explain as much as they thought proper of Lord Carse's plans, and of their own method of proceeding.

They told her that Lord Carse found himself compelled, for family reasons, to sequester her. For her life and safety there was no fear; but she was to live where she could have that personal liberty of which no one wished to deprive her, without opportunity of intercourse with her family.

“And where can that be?” she asked. “Who will undertake to say that I shall live, in the first place; and that my children shall not hear from me, in the next?”

“Where your abode is to be, we do not know,” replied Mr. Forster. “Perhaps it is not yet settled. As for your life, Madam, I have engaged to transfer you alive and safe, as far as lies in human power.”

“Transfer me! To whom?”

“To another friend of your husband's, who will take equal care of you. I am sorry for your threats of violence on yourself. They compel me to do what I should not otherwise have thought of;—to forbid your being alone, even in this your own room.”

“You do not mean”

“ I mean that you are not to be left unwatched for a single instant. There is a woman in the house,—the housekeeper. She and her husband will enter this room when I leave it; and I advise you to say nothing to them against this arrangement.”

“ They shall have no peace with me.”

“ I am sorry for it. It will be a bad preparation for your further journey. You would do better to lie down and rest,—for which ample time shall be allowed.”

The people in charge of the house were summoned, and ordered, in the lady's hearing, to watch her rest, and on no account to leave the room till desired to do so. A table was set out in one corner, with meat and bread, wine and ale. But the unhappy lady would not attempt either to eat or sleep. She sat by the fire, faint, weary and gloomy. She listened to the sounds from below till the whole party had supped, and lain down for the night. Then she watched her guards,—the woman knitting, and the man reading his Bible. At last, she could hold up no longer. Her head sank on her breast; and she was scarcely conscious of being gently lifted, laid upon the bed, and covered up warm with cloak and plaid.

CHAPTER IV.

NEWSPAPERS.

LADY Carse did not awake till the afternoon of the next day; and then she saw the housekeeper sitting knitting on the same chair, and looking as if she had never stirred since she took her place there in the middle of the night. The man was not there.

The woman cheerfully invited the lady to rise and refresh herself, and come to the fire, and then go down and dine. But Lady Carse's spirit was awake as soon as her eyes were. She said she would never rise—never eat again. The woman begged her to think better of it, or she should be obliged to call her husband to resume his watch, and to let Mr. Forster know of her refusal to take food. To this the poor lady answered only by burying her face in the coverings, and remaining silent and motionless, for all the woman could say.

In a little while, up came Mr. Forster, with three Highlanders. They lifted her, as if she had been a child, placed her in an easy chair by the fireside, held back her head, and poured down her throat a basin full of strong broth.

“It grieves me, Madam,” said Mr. Forster, “to be compelled to treat you thus—like a wayward child. But I am answerable for your life. You will be fed in this way as often as you decline necessary food.”

“ I defy you still,” she cried.

“ Indeed !” said he, with a perplexed look. She had been searched by the housekeeper in her sleep ; and it was certain that no weapon and no drug was about her person. She presently lay back in the chair, as if wishing to sleep, throwing a shawl over her head ; and all withdrew except the housekeeper and her husband.

In a little while some movement was perceived under the shawl, and then there was a suppressed choking sound. The desperate woman was swallowing her hair, in order to vomit up the nourishment she had taken—as another lady in desperate circumstances once did to get rid of poison. The housekeeper was ordered to cut off her hair, and Mr. Forster then rather rejoiced in this proof that she carried no means of destroying her life.

As soon as it was quite dark she was compelled to take more food, and then wrapped up warmly for a night-ride. Mr. Forster invited her to promise that she would not speak, that he might be spared the necessity of bandaging her mouth. But she declared her intention of speaking on every possible occasion ; and she was therefore effectually prevented from opening her mouth at all.

On they rode through the night, stopping to dismount only twice ; and then it was not at any house, but at mere sheepfolds, where a fire was kindled by some of the party, and where they drank whisky, and laughed and talked in the warmth and glow of the fire, as if the poor lady had not been present. Between her internal passion, her need of more food than she would take, the strangeness of the scene, with the sparkling cold stars overhead, and the heat and glow of the

fire under the wall—amidst these distracting influences the lady felt confused and ill, and would have been glad now to have been free to converse quietly, and to accept the mercy Mr. Forster had been ready to show her. He was as watchful as ever, sat next her as she lay on the ground, said at last that they had not much further to go, and felt her pulse. As the grey light of morning strengthened, he went slower and slower, and encouraged her to lean upon him, which her weakness compelled her to do. He sent forward the factor of the estate they were now entering upon, desiring him to see that everything was warm and comfortable.

When the building they were approaching came in view, the poor lady wondered how it could ever be made warm and comfortable. It was a little old tower, the top of which was in ruins, and the rest as dreary-looking as possible. Cold and bare it stood on a waste hill-side. It would have looked like a mere grey pillar set down on the scanty pasture, but for a square patch behind, which was walled in by a hard ugly wall of stones. A thin grey smoke arose from it, showing that some one was within; and dogs began to bark as the party drew near.

One woman was here as at the last resting-place. She showed the way by the narrow winding stair, up which Lady Carse was carried like a corpse, and laid on a little bed in a very small room, whose single window was boarded up, leaving only a square of glass at the top to admit the light.

Mr. Forster stood by the bedside, and said firmly, “Now, Lady Carse, listen to me for a moment, and then you will be left with such freedom as this

room and this woman's attendance can afford you. You are so exhausted, that we have changed our plan of travel. You will remain here, in this room, till you have so recruited yourself by food and rest as to be able to proceed to a place where all restraint will be withdrawn. When you think yourself able to proceed, and declare your willingness to do so, I, or a friend of mine, will be at your service—at your call at any hour. Till then, this room is your abode; and till then I bid you farewell."

He unfastened the bandage, and was gone before she could speak to him. What she wanted to say was, that on such terms she would never leave this room again. She desired the woman to tell him so; but the woman said she had orders to carry no messages.

Where there is no help and no hope, any force of mere temper is sure to give way, as Mr. Forster well knew. Injured people who have done no wrong, and who bear no anger against their enemies, have an inward strength and liberty of mind which enable them to bear on firmly, and to be immoveable in their righteous purposes; so that, as has been shown by many examples, they will be torn limb from limb sooner than yield. Lady Carse was an injured person—most deeply injured, but she was not innocent. She had a purpose; but it was a vindictive one; and her soul was all tossed with passion, instead of being settled in patience. So her intentions of starving herself—of making Mr. Forster miserable by killing herself through want of sleep and food, gave way; and then she was in a rage with herself for having given way. When all was still in the tower, and the silent

woman who attended her knitted on for hours together, as if she were a machine; and there was nothing to be seen from the boarded window; and the smouldering peats in the fire-place looked as if they were asleep, Lady Carse could not always keep awake, and, once asleep, she did not wake for many hours.

When, at length, she started up and looked around her, she was alone, and the room was lighted only by a flickering blaze from the fire-place. This dancing light fell on a little low round table, on which was a plate with some slices of mutton-ham, some oat-cake, three or four eggs, and a pitcher. She was ravenously hungry, and she was alone. She thought she would take something—so little as to save her pride, and not to show that she had yielded. But, once yielding, this was impossible. She ate, and ate, till all was gone—even the eggs; and it would have been the same if they had been raw. The pitcher contained ale, and she emptied it. When she had done, she could have died with shame. She was just thinking of setting her dress on fire, when she heard the woman's step on the stair. She threw herself on the bed, and pretended to be asleep. Presently she was so, and she had another long nap. When she woke the table had nothing on it but the woman's knitting; the woman was putting peats on the fire, and she made no remark, then or afterwards, on the disappearance of the food. From that day forward food was laid out while the lady slept; and when she awoke, she found herself alone to eat it. It was served without knife or fork, with only bone spoons. It would have been intolerable shame to her if she had known that she was watched, through

a little hole in the door, as a precaution against any attempt on her life.

But her intentions of this kind too gave way. She was well aware that, though not free to go where she liked, she could, any day, find herself in the open air, with liberty to converse, except on certain subjects; and that she might presently be in some abode—she did not know what—where she could have full personal liberty, and her present confinement being her own choice made it much less dignified, and this caused her to waver about throwing off life and captivity together. The moment never came when she was disposed to try.

At the end of a week she felt great curiosity to know whether Mr. Forster was at the tower all this time, waiting her pleasure. She would not inquire, lest she should be suspected of the truth—that she was beginning to wish to see him. She tried one or two distant questions on her attendant, but the woman knew nothing. There seemed to be no sort of question that she could answer.

In a few days more the desire for some conversation with somebody became very pressing, and Lady Carse was not in the habit of denying herself anything she wished for. Still, her pride pulled the other way. The plan she thought of was to sit apparently musing or asleep by the fire while her attendant swept the floor of her room, and suddenly to run down stairs while the door was open. This she did one day when she was pretty sure she had heard an unusual sound of horses' feet below. If Mr. Forster should be going without her seeing him, it would be dreadful. If he should have arrived after an absence, this would afford a pretext for renewing intercourse with him. So she watched

her moment, sprang to the door, and was down the stair before her attendant could utter a cry of warning to those below.

Lady Carse stood on the last stair, gazing into the little kitchen, which occupied the ground-floor of the tower. Two or three people turned and gazed at her, as startled perhaps as herself; and she *was* startled, for one of them was Lord Lovat.

Mr. Forster recovered himself, bowed, and said that perhaps she found herself able to travel; in which case, he was at her service.

“O dear, no!” she said. She had no intention whatever of travelling further. She had heard an arrival of horsemen, and had merely come down to know if there was any news from Edinburgh.

Lord Lovat bowed, said he had just arrived from town, and would be happy to wait on her up-stairs with any tidings that she might inquire for.

“By no means,” she said, haughtily. She would wait for tidings rather than learn them from Lord Lovat. She turned, and went up stairs again, stung by hearing Lord Lovat’s hateful laugh behind her as she went.

As she sat by the fire, devouring her shame and wrath, her attendant came up with a handful of newspapers, and Lord Lovat’s compliments, and he had sent her the latest Edinburgh news to read, as she did not wish to hear it from him. She snatched the papers, meaning to thrust them into the fire, in token of contempt for the sender; but a longing to read them came over her, and she might convey sufficient contempt by throwing them on the bed—and this she accordingly did.

She watched them, however, as a cat does a mouse. The woman seemed to have no intention

of going down any more to-day. Whether the lady was watched, and her impatience detected, through the hole in the door, or whether humanity suggested that the unhappy creature should be permitted an hour of solitude on such an occasion, the woman was called down, and did not immediately return.

How impatiently, then, were the papers seized! How unsettled was the eye which ran over the columns, while the mind was too feverish to comprehend what it read! In a little while, however, the ordinary method of newspaper reading established itself; and she went on from one item to another with more amusement than anxiety. In this mood, and with the utmost suddenness, she came upon the announcement, in large letters, of "the Funeral of Lady Carse!" It was even so! In one paper was a paragraph intimating the threatening illness of Lady Carse; in the next, the announcement of her death; in the third, a full account of her funeral, as taking place from her husband's house.

Her fate was now clear. She was lost to the world for ever! In the midst of the agony of this doom she could yet be stung by the thought that this was the cause of Lord Lovat's complaisance in sending her the newspapers; that here was the reason of the only indulgence which had been permitted her!

As for the rest, her mind made short work of it. Her object must now be to confound her foes—to prove to the world that she was not dead and buried. From this place she could not do this. Here there was no scope and no hope. In travelling, and in her future residence, there might be a thousand opportunities. She could not stay here another

hour ; and so she sent word to Mr. Forster. His reply was, that he should be happy to escort her that night. From the stair-head she told him that she could not wait till night. He declared it impossible to make provision for her comfort along the road without a few hours' notice by a horseman sent forward. The messenger was already saddling his horse ; and by nine in the evening the rest of the party would follow.

At nine the lady was on her pillion ; but now comfortably clad in a country dress—homely, but warm. It was dark : but she was informed that the party thoroughly knew their road ; and that in four or five days they should have the benefit of the young moon.

So, after four or five days, they were to be still travelling ! Where could they be carrying her ?

CHAPTER V.

CROSS ROADS AND SHORT SEAS.

WHERE they were carrying her was more than Lady Carse herself could discover. To the day of her death she never knew what country she had traversed during the dreary and fatiguing week which ensued. She saw Stirling Castle standing up on its mighty rock against the dim sky; and she knew that before dawn they had entered the Highlands. But beyond this she was wholly ignorant. In those days there were no milestones on the road she travelled. The party went near no town, stopped at no inn, and never permitted her an opportunity of speaking to any one out of their own number. They always halted before daylight at some solitary house—left open for them, but uninhabited—òr at some cowshed, where they shook down straw for her bed, made a fire, and cooked their food; and at night they always remounted, and rode for many hours, through a wild country, where the most hopeful of captives could not dream of rescue. Sometimes they carried torches while ascending a narrow ravine, where a winter torrent dashed down the steep rocks and whirled away below, and where the lady unawares showed her desire to live by clinging faster to the horseman behind whom she rode. Sometimes she saw the whole starry hemisphere resting like a dome on a vast moorland, the stars rising from the horizon here and sinking

there, as at sea. The party rarely passed any farmsteads or other dwellings; and when they did, silence was commanded, and the riders turned their horses on the grass or soft earth, in order to appear as little as possible like a cavalcade to any wakeful ears. Once, on such an occasion, Lady Carse screamed aloud; but this only caused her to be carried at a gallop, which instantly silenced her, and then to be gagged for the rest of the night. She would have promised to make no such attempt again, such a horror had she now of the muffle which bandaged her mouth, but nobody asked her to promise. On the contrary, she heard one man say to another, that the lady might scream all night long now, if she liked; nobody but the eagles would answer her, now she was among the Frasers.

Among the Frasers! Then she was on Lord Lovat's estates. Here there was no hope for her; and all her anxiety was to get on, though every step removed her further from her friends, and from the protection of law. But this was exactly the place where she was to stop for a considerable time.

Having arrived at a solitary house among moorland hills, Mr. Forster told her that she would live here till the days should be longer, and the weather warm enough for a more comfortable prosecution of her further journey. He would advise her to take exercise in the garden, small as it was, and to be cheerful, and preserve her health, in expectation of the summer, when she would reach a place where all restrictions on her personal liberty would cease. He would now bid her farewell.

“You are going back to Edinburgh,” said she,

rising from her seat by the fire. "You will see Lord Carse. Tell him, that though he has buried his wife, he has not got rid of her. She will haunt him—she will shame him—she will ruin him yet."

"I see now," observed a voice behind her. . . . She turned and perceived Lord Lovat, who addressed himself to Mr. Forster, saying,

"I see now that it *is* best to let such people live. If she were dead, we cannot say but that she might haunt him; though I myself have no great belief of it. As it is, she is safe out of his way—at any rate, till she dies first. I see now that his method is the right one."

"Why, I don't know, my lord," replied Lady Carse. "You should consider how little trouble it would have cost to put me out of the way in my grave; and how much trouble I am costing you now. It is some comfort to me to think of the annoyance and risk, and fatigue and expense, I am causing you all."

"You mistake the thing, Madam. We rejoice in these things, as incurred for the sake of some people over the water. It gratifies our loyalty—our loyalty, Madam, is a sentiment which exalts and endears the meanest services, even that of sequestering a spy, an informer."

"Come, come, Lovat, it is time we were off," said Mr. Forster, who was at once ashamed of his companion's brutality, and alarmed at its effect upon the lady. She looked as if she would die on the spot. She had not been aware till now how her pride had been gratified by the sense of her own importance, caused by so many gentlemen of consequence entering into her husband's plot against her liberty. She was now rudely told that it was all for their

own sakes. She was controlled not as a dignified and powerful person, but as a mischievous informer. She rallied quickly—not only through pride, but from the thought that power is power, whencesoever derived, and that she might yet make Lord Lovat feel this. She curtseyed to the gentlemen, saying,

“It is your turn now to jeer, Gentlemen; and to board up windows, and the like. The day may come when I shall sit at a window to see your heads fall.”

“Time will show,” said Lord Lovat, with a smile, and an elegant bow. And they left her alone.

They no longer feared to leave her alone. Her temper was well known to them; and her purposes of ultimate revenge, once clearly announced, were a guarantee that she would, if possible, live to execute them. She would make no attempts upon her life henceforward.

Weeks and months passed on. The snow came, and lay long, and melted away. Beyond the garden wall she saw sprinklings of young grass among the dark heather; and now the bleat of a lamb, and now the scudding brood of the moor-fowl, told her that spring was come. Long lines of wild geese in the upper air, winging steadily northwards, indicated the advancing season. The whins within view burst into blossom; and the morning breeze which dried the dews wafted their fragrance. Then the brooding mists drew off under the increasing warmth of the sun; and the lady discovered that there was a lake within view—a wide expanse, winding away among mountains till it was lost behind their promontories. She strained

her eyes to see vessels on this lake, and now and then she did perceive a little sail hoisted, or a black speck, which must be a row-boat traversing the waters when they were sheeny in the declining sun. These things, and the lengthening and warmth of the days, quickened her impatience to be removed. She often asked the people of the house whether no news and no messengers had come; but they did not improve in their knowledge of the English tongue any more than she did in that of the Gaelic, and she could obtain no satisfaction. In the sunny mornings she lay on the little turf-plat in the garden, or walked restlessly among the cabbage-beds (being allowed to go no further), or shook the locked gate desperately, till some one came out to warn her to let it alone. In the June nights she stood at her window, only one small pane of which would open, watching the mists shifting and curling in the moonlight, or the sheet lightning which now and then revealed the lake in the bosom of the mountains, or appeared to lay open the whole sky. But June passed away, and there was no change. July came and went—the sun was visibly shortening his daily journey, and leaving an hour of actual darkness in the middle of the night: and still there was no prospect of a further journey. She began to doubt Mr. Forster as much as she hated Lord Lovat, and to say to herself that his promises of further personal liberty in the summer were mere coaxing words, uttered to secure a quiet retreat from her presence. If she could see him, for only five minutes, how she would tell him her mind!

She never again saw Mr. Forster: but, one night in August, while she was at the window, and just

growing sleepy, she was summoned by the woman of the house to dress herself for a night ride. She prepared herself eagerly enough, and was off presently, without knowing anything of the horsemen who escorted her.

It was with a gleam of pleasure that she saw that they were approaching the lake she had so often gazed at from afar: and her heart grew lighter still when she found that she was to traverse it. She began to talk, in her new exhilaration; and she did not leave off, though nobody replied. But her exclamations about the sunrise, the clearness of the water, and the leaping of the fish, died away when she looked from face to face of those about her, and found them all strange and very stern. At last, the dip of the oars was the only sound; but it was a pleasant and soothing one. All went well this day. After landing, the party proceeded westwards—as they did nightly for nearly a week. It mattered little that they did not enter a house in all that time. The weather was so fine, that a sheepfold, or a grassy nook of the moorland, served all needful purposes of a resting-place by day.

On the sixth night, a surprise, and a terrible surprise, awaited the poor lady. Her heart misgave her when the night-wind brought the sound of the sea to her ears—the surging sea which tosses and roars in the rocky inlets of the western coast of Scotland. But her dismay was dreadful when she discovered that there was a vessel below, on board which she was to be carried without delay. On the instant, dreadful visions arose before her imagination, of her being carried to a foreign shore, to be delivered into the hands of the Stuarts, to be punished as a traitor and spy; and of those

far off plantations and dismal colonies where people troublesome to their families were said, to be sent, to be chained to servile labour with criminals and slaves. She wept bitterly: she clasped her hands—she threw herself at the feet of the conductor of the party—she appealed to them all, telling them to do what they would with her, if only they would not carry her to sea. Most of them looked at one another, and made no reply—not understanding her language. The conductor told her to fear nothing, as she was in the hands of the Macdonalds, who had orders from Sir Alexander Macdonald of Skye to provide for her safety. He promised that the voyage would not be a long one; and that as soon as the sloop should have left the loch she should be told where she was going. With that, he lifted her lightly, stepped into a boat, and was rowed to the sloop, where she was received by the owner, and half a dozen other Macdonalds. For some hours they waited for a wind; and sorely did the master wish it would come; for the lady lost not a glimpse of an opportunity of pleading her cause, explaining that she was stolen from Edinburgh, against the laws. He told her she had better be quiet, as nothing could be done. Sir Alexander Macdonald was in the affair. He, for one, would never keep her or any one against their will, unless Sir Alexander Macdonald were in it: but nothing could be done. He saw, however, that some impression was made on one person, who visited the sloop on business, one William Tolney, who had connexions at Inverness from having once been a merchant there, and who was now a tenant of the Macleods in a neighbouring island. This man was evidently touched; and the Macdonalds

held a consultation in consequence, the result of which was that William Tolney was induced to be silent on what he had seen and heard. But for many a weary year after did Lady Carse turn with hope to the image of the stranger who had listened to her on board the sloop, taken the address of her lawyer, and said that in his opinion something must be done.

In the evening the wind rose, and the sloop moved down the loch. With a heavy heart the lady next morning watched the vanishing of the last of Glengarry's seats, on a green platform between the grey and bald mountains; then the last fishing hamlet on the shores; and, finally, a flock of herons come abroad to the remotest point of the shore from their roosting-places in the tall trees that sheltered Glengarry's abode. After that all was wretchedness. For many days she was on the tossing sea—the sloop now scudding before the wind, now heaving on the troubled waters, now creeping along between desolate-looking islands, now apparently lost amidst the boundless ocean. At length, soon after sunrise, one bright morning, the sail was taken in, and the vessel lay before the entrance of a harbour which looked like the mouth of a small river. At noon the sun beat hot on the deck of the sloop. In the afternoon the lady impatiently asked what they were waiting for—if this really was, as she was told, their place of destination. The wind was not contrary; what were they waiting for?

“No, Madam; the wind is fair. But it is a curious circumstance about this harbour that it can be entered safely only at night. It is one of the most dangerous harbours in all the isles.”

“ And you dare to enter it at night ? What do you mean ? ”

“ I will show you, Madam, when night comes. ”

Lady Carse suspected that the delay was on her account ; that she was not to land by daylight, lest too much sympathy should be excited by her among the inhabitants. Her indignation at this stimulated her to observe all she could of the appearance of the island, in case of opportunity occurring to turn to the account of an escape any knowledge she might obtain. On the rocky ledges which stretched out into the sea lay basking several seals ; and all about them, and on every higher ledge, were myriads of puffins. Hundreds of puffins and fulmars were in the air, and skimming the waters. The fulmars poised themselves on their long wings ; the fat little puffins puffed about in the water, and made a great commotion where everything else was quiet. From these lower ridges of rock vast masses arose, black and solemn, some perpendicular, some with a slope too steep and smooth to permit a moment's dream of climbing them. Even on this warm day of August the clouds had not risen above the highest peaks ; and they threw a gloom over the interior of the small island, while the skirting rocks and sea were glittering in the sunshine. Even the scanty herbage of the slopes at the top of the rocks looked almost a bright green where the sun fell upon it ; and especially where it descended so far as to come into contrast with the blackness of the yawning caverns with which the rocky wall was here and there perforated.

The lady perceived no dwellings ; but Macdonald, who observed her searching gaze, pointed his glass and invited her to look through it. At

first she saw nothing but a dim confusion of grey rocks and dull grass; but at length she made out a grey cottage, with a roof of turf, and a peat-stack beside it.

“ I see one dwelling,” said the lady.

“ You see it,” observed Macdonald, satisfied, and resuming his glass. Then, observing the lady was not satisfied, he added,

“ There are more dwellings, but they are behind yonder ridge, out of sight. That is where my place is.”

Lady Carse did not at present discern where the dangerous sympathy with her case was to come from. But there was no saying how many dwellings there might be behind that ridge. She once more insisted on landing by daylight; and was once more told that it was out of the question. She resolved to keep as wide awake as her suspicions, in order to see what was to be done with her. She was anxiously on the watch in the darkness an hour before midnight, when Macdonald said to her,

“ Now for it, Madam! I will presently show you something curious.”

The sloop began to move under the soft breathing night wind; and in a few minutes Macdonald asked her if she saw anything before her, a little to the right? At first she did not; but was presently told, that a tiny spark, too minute to be noticed by any but those who were looking for it, was a guiding light.

“ Where is it?” asked the lady. “ Why have not you a more effectual light?”

“ We are thankful enough to have any: and it serves our turn.”

“O! I suppose it is a smuggler’s signal; and it would not do to make it more conspicuous.”

“No, Madam. It is far from being a smuggler’s signal. There is a woman, Annie Fleming, living in the grey house I showed you, an honest and pious soul, who keeps up that light for all that want it.”

“Why? Who employs her?”

“She does it of her own liking. Some have heard tell, but I don’t know it for true, that when she and her husband were young she saw him drown, from his boat having run foul in the harbour that she overlooks; and that from that day to this she has had a light up there every night. I can say that I never miss it when I come home; and I always enter by night, trusting to it as the best landmark in this difficult harbour.”

“And do the other inhabitants trust to it, and come in by night?”

Macdonald answered, that his was the only boat on the island; but he believed that all who had business on the sea between this and Skye knew that light, and made use of it, on occasion, in dangerous weather. And now he must not talk, but see to his vessel.

This the only boat on the island! He must mean the only sloop. There must be fishing-boats. There must and should be, the lady resolved; for she would get back to the mainland. She would not spend her days here, beyond the westerly Skye, where she had just learned that this island lay.

The anxious business of entering the harbour was accomplished by slow degrees, under the guidance of the spark on the hill-side. At dawn the little vessel was moored to a natural pier of rock;

and the lady was asked whether she would proceed to Macdonald's house immediately, or take some hours' rest first.

Here ended her fears of being secluded from popular sympathy. She was weary of the sea and the vessel, and made all haste to leave them.

Her choice lay between walking and being carried by Highlanders. She chose to walk ; and with some fatigue, and no little internal indignation, she traversed a mile and a half of rocky and moorland ways, then arriving at a sordid and dreary looking farmhouse standing alone in a wild place, to which Macdonald proudly introduced her as Sir Alexander's estate on this island, of which he was the tenant.

CHAPTER VI.

THE STEADFAST.

IT was a serene evening when, the day after her landing, Lady Carse approached widow Fleming's abode. The sun was going down in a clear sky; and when, turning from the dazzling western sea, the eye wandered eastwards, the view was such as could not but transport a heart at ease. The tide was low, and long shadows from the rocks lay upon the yellow sands, and darkened, near the shore, the translucent sea. At the entrance of the black caverns, the spray leaped up on the advance of every wave,—not in threatening, but as if at play. Far away over the lilac and green waters arose the craggy peaks of Skye, their projections and hollows in the softest light and shadow. As the sea-birds rose from their rest upon the billows, opposite the sun, diamond drops fell from their wings. Nearer at hand there was little beauty but what a brilliant sunset sheds over every scene. There were shadows from the cottage over the dull green sward, and from the two or three goats which moved about on the ledges and slopes of the upper rocks. The cottage itself was more lowly and much more odd than the lady had conceived, from anything she had yet seen or heard of. Its walls were six feet thick, and roofed from the inside, leaving a sort of platform all round, which was overgrown with coarse herbage. The outer and

inner surfaces of the wall were of stones, and the middle part was filled in with earth ; so that grass might well grow on the top. The roof was of thatch —part straw, part sods, tied down to cross-poles by ropes of twisted heather. The walls did not rise more than five feet from the ground ; and nothing could be easier than for the goats to leap up, when tempted to graze there. A kid was now amusing itself on one corner. As Lady Carse walked round, she was startled at seeing a woman sitting on the opposite corner. Her back was to the sun—her gaze fixed on the sea, and her fingers were busy knitting. The lady had some doubts at first about its being the widow, as this woman wore a bright cotton handkerchief tied over her head : but a glance at the face, when it was turned towards her, assured her that it was Annie Fleming herself.

“ No, do not come down,” said the lady. “ Let me come up beside you. I see the way.”

And she stepped up by means of the projecting stones of the wall, and threw herself down beside the quiet knitter.

“ What are you making? Mittens? And what of? What sort of wool is this?”

“ It is goats’ hair.”

“ Tiresome work !” the lady observed. “ Wool is bad enough ; but these short lengths of hair ! I should never have patience.”

The widow replied that she had time in these summer evenings ; and she was glad to take the chance of selling a few pairs when Macdonald went to the main, once or twice a year.

“ How do they sell? What do you get for them?”

“ I get oil to last me for some time.”

“ And what else? ”

“ Now and then I may want something else ; but I get chiefly oil—as what I want most.”

The widow saw that Lady Carse was not attending to what she said, and was merely making an opening for what she herself wanted to utter : so Annie said no more of her work and its payment, but waited.

“ This is a dreadful place,” the lady burst out. “ Nobody can live here.”

“ I have heard that there are kindlier places to live in,” the widow replied. “ This island must appear rather bare to people who come from the south,—as I partly remember myself.”

“ Where did you come from? Do you know where I come from? Do you know who I am? ” cried the lady.

“ I came from Dumfries. I have not heard where you lived, my Lady. I was told by Macdonald that you came by Sir Alexander Macdonald’s orders, to live here henceforward.”

“ I will not live here henceforward. I would sooner die.”

The widow looked surprised. In answer to that look, Lady Carse said,

“ Ah! you do not know who I am, nor what brought me here, or you would see that I cannot live here, and why I would rather die.—Why do not you speak? Why do you not ask me what I have suffered? ”

“ I should not think of it, my Lady. Those who have suffered are slow to speak of their heart-pain, and would be ashamed before God to say how much oftener they would rather have died.”

“ I must speak, however, and I will,” declared Lady Carse. “ You know I must ; and you are the only person in the island that I can speak to.— I want to live with you. I must. I know you are a good woman. I know you are kind. If you are kind to mere strangers that come in boats, and keep a light to save them from shipwreck, you will not be cruel to me—the most ill-used creature—the most wretched—the most”

She hid her face on her knees, and wept bitterly.

“ Take courage, my Lady,” said Annie. “ If you have not strength enough for your troubles to-day, it only shows that there is more to come.”

“ I do not want strength,” said the lady. “ You do not know me. I am not wanting in strength. What I want—what I must have, is justice.”

“ Well—that is what we are all most sure of, when God’s day comes,” said Annie. “ That we are quite sure of. And we may surely hope for patience till then, if we really wish it. So I trust you will be comforted, my Lady.”

“ I cannot stay here, however. There are no people here. There is nobody that I can endure at Macdonald’s, and there are none others but labourers ; and they speak only Gaelic. And it is a wretched place. They have not even bread.—Mrs. Fleming, I must come and live with you.”

“ I have no bread, my Lady. I have nothing so good as they have at Macdonald’s.”

“ You have a kind heart. Never mind the bread now. We will see about that. I don’t care how I live ; but I want to stay with you. I want never to go back to Macdonald’s.”

The widow stepped down to the ground, and beckoned to the lady to follow her into the house.

It was a poor place as could be seen:—one room, with a glazed window looking towards the harbour, a fire-place and a bed opposite the window;—a rickety old bedstead, with an exhausted flock bed and a rug upon it; and from one end of the apartment, a small dim space partitioned off, in which was a still less comfortable bed, laid on trestles made of drift-wood.

“Who sleeps here?”

“My son, when he is at home. He is absent now, my Lady: and you see, this is the only place;—no place for you, my Lady.”

Lady Carse shrank back impatiently. She then turned and said,

“I might have this larger room, and you the other. I shall find means of paying you. . . .”

“Impossible, Madam,” the widow replied. “I am obliged to occupy this room.”

“For to-night, at least, you will let me have it. I cannot go back to Macdonald’s to-night. I will not go back at all: and you cannot turn me out to-night. I have other reasons besides those I mentioned. I must be in sight of the harbour. It is my only hope.”

“You can stay here, if you will, Madam: and you can have that bed. But I can never leave this room between dark and light. I have yonder lamp to attend to.”

“O! I will attend to the lamp.”

The widow smiled, and observed that she hoped the lady would have better sleep than she could enjoy if she had the lamp to watch; and that was a business which she could not commit to another hand.—In the course of the argument, the lady discovered that it would indeed be a serious matter

to let out both fire and lamp, as there was no tinder-box on the island, and no wood, except in the season of storms, when some was drifted up wet.

“ I should like to live with you, and help you to keep up your lamp,” said the lady. “ If we could only manage a room for me. . . . Not that I mean to stay in this island! I will not submit to that. But while I am waiting to get away, I should like to spend my time with you. You have a heart. You would feel for me.”

“ I do feel for you, Madam. This must be a terrible place for you, just to-day,—and for many days to come. But O! my Lady, if you want peace of mind, this is the place! It is a blessing that may be had anywhere, I know. One would think it shone down from the sky or breathed out from the air,—it is so sure to be wherever the sky bends over, or the air wraps us round. But of all places, this is the one for peace of mind.”

“ This!—this dreary island!”

“ This quiet island. Look out now, and see if you can call it dreary. Why, Madam, there can hardly be a brighter glory, or a more cheerful glow among the sons of God about the throne, than there is at this moment over sea and shore, and near at hand up to the very stone of my threshold. Madam, I could never think this island dreary.”

“ It is not always sunset, nor always summer-time,” said Lady Carse, who could not deny nor wholly resist the beauty of the scene.

“ Other beauty comes by night and in the winter,” observed the widow, “ and at times a grandeur which is better than the beauty. If the softness of this sunshine nourishes our peace of mind,

yet more does the might of the storms. The beauty might be God's messenger. The might is God himself."

"You speak as if you did not fear God," said the lady, with the light inexperience of one to whom such subjects were not familiar.

"As a sinner, I fear him, Madam. But as his child. . . . Why, Madam, what else have we in all the universe? And having him, what more do we want?"

"He has made us full of wants," said the lady. "I, for one, am all bereaved, and very, very wretched.—But do not let us talk of that now. One who is alone in this place, and knows and needs nothing beyond, cannot enter into my sorrows at once. It will take long to make you conceive such misery as mine. But it will be a comfort to me to open my heart to you. And I must live within view of the harbour. I must see every boat that comes. They say you do."

"I do. They are few; but I see them all."

"And you save a good many by the spark in your window."

"It has pleased God to save some, it is thought, who would have perished as some perished before them. He set me that task, in a solemn way, many years ago; and any mercy that has grown out of it is His.—Do you see any vessel on the sea, Madam? I always look abroad the last thing before the sun goes down. My eyes can hardly be much older than yours; but they are much worn."

"How have you so used your eyes? Is it that hair-knitting?"

"That is not good. But it is more the sharp

winds, and the night-watching, and the shine of the sea in the day."

"I must live with you. I will watch for you. night and day. You think I cannot. You think I shall tire. Why, you are not weary of it."

"O no! I shall never be weary of it."

"Much less should I. You want only to keep up your lamp. I want to get away. All the interests of my life lie beyond this sea; and do you think I shall tire of watching for the opportunity?—I will watch through this very night. You shall go to bed, and sleep securely, and I will keep your lamp. And to-morrow we will arrange something. Why should I not have a room,—a cottage built at the end of yours? I will."

"If you could find any one to build it," suggested the widow.

"Somebody built Macdonald's, I suppose. And yours."

"Macdonald's is very old;—built, it is thought, at the same time with the chapel, which has been in ruins these hundred years. My husband built ours,—with me to help him;—and also his brother, who died before it was finished."

"Where is your son?" inquired the lady. "If he will undertake to work for me, I will get it done. Where is your son? And what is his business?"

"I do not know exactly where he is."

"Well, but is he on the island?"

"I believe so. He comes and goes according to his business. In the early summer he seeks eggs all over the island; and, somewhat later, the eider-down. When he can get nothing better he brings the birds themselves."

“What do you do with them?”

“We keep the feathers, and also the skins. The skins are warm to cover the feet with, when made into socks. If the birds are not very old, we salt them for winter food: and at worst, I get some oil from them. But I get most oil from the young seals, and from the livers of the fish he catches at times.”

“Fish! then he has a boat! Does he go out in a boat to fish?”

“I can hardly say that he has a boat,” replied the mother, with an extraordinary calmness of manner that told of internal effort. Our caverns run very deep into the rocks; and the ledges run out far into the sea. Rollo has made a kind of raft of the drift-wood he found: and on this he crosses the water in the caverns, and passes from ledge to ledge, fishing as he goes. This is our only way of getting fish, except when a chance boat comes into the harbour.”

“Could that raft go out on a calm day,—on a very smooth sea,—to meet any boat at a distance?”

“Impossible! Madam. I think it too dangerous in our smallest coves to be used without sin. It is against my judgment that Rollo ever goes round the end of a ledge, which he has been seen to do.”

“But it is impossible to get a boat? Have you never had a boat?”

“We once had a boat, Madam: and it was lost.”

Even the selfish Lady Carse reproached herself for her question. It struck her now that boat and husband had been lost together; for Macdonald

had told her that Annie Fleming had seen her husband drown.

“I wish I knew where Rollo is,” she said, to break the silence. “I think something might be done. I think I could find a way. Do not you wish you knew where he was?”

“No, Madam.”

“Well! perhaps you might be uneasy about him if you did. But which way did he go?”

The widow pointed northwards, where huge masses of rock appeared tumbled one upon another, and into the sea, at the base of a precipice two hundred feet high. She further told, in reply to a question, that Rollo went forth yesterday, without saying where he was going; and there were caves among the rocks she had pointed out, where Rollo might possibly be fishing.

Lady Carse found it vexatious that darkness was coming on. She had a purpose; but the sun did not set the later, nor promise to rise the earlier, on that account.—When the widow set before her some oaten bread and dried fish, she ate, without perceiving that none was left for her hostess. And when the widow lighted the iron lamp and set it in the window, the lady made only faint pretences of a wish to sit up and watch it. She also said nothing of occupying the meaner bed. She was persuaded that her first duty was to obtain some good rest, preparatory to going forth to seek Rollo, and induce him to take her on his raft to some place whence she might escape to the mainland. So she lay down on the widow's bed, and slept soundly,—her hungry hostess sitting by the smouldering peats in the rude fire-place,—now and then smiling at the idea of her guest's late zeal about watching

the lamp for her, in order to give her a good night's rest. When daylight came, she retired to her son's bed, and had just dropped asleep when Lady Carse roused her, to ask for some breakfast to take with her, as she did not know when she should be back from her expedition. Again the widow smiled, as she said that there was nothing in the house. At this time of the year there were no stores; and a good appetite at night left nothing for the morning.

“O dear!” said the lady. “Well: I dare say your sitting up made you hungry enough to finish everything while I was asleep. No doubt it must. But what to do I know not. I will not go back to Macdonald's, if I starve for it. Perhaps I may meet some fisherman, or somebody. I will try.—Good morning. I shall come back: but I will not put you long out of your ways. I will get a cottage built at the end of yours, as soon as possible.” The door closed behind her, and once more the widow smiled, as she composed herself to rest on her own bed. She had already returned thanks for the blessings with which the new day had opened; and especially that to one so lowly as herself was permitted the honour and privilege,—so unlooked for and unthought of,—of dispensing hospitality.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ROVING OF THE RESTLESS.

THE lady began walking at a great rate, being in a vast hurry to find Rollo. She descended to the shore, knowing that if she kept on the heights she should arrive at precipices which would forbid all access to the caves below. The tide was going down; and as soon as she reached the sands of a little cove she was pleased to see a good many shellfish. Her first thought was that she would collect some, and carry them up for Annie Fleming's breakfast: but she immediately remembered that this would add to her fatigues, and consume her precious time; and she gave up the thought, and began picking up cockles for herself—large blue cockles, which she thought would afford her an excellent breakfast, if only she could meet with some fresh bread and butter, in some nook of the island. She turned up her skirt—the skirt of the country-woman's gown which she wore—and made a bag of it for her cockles, rejoicing for the moment that it was not one of her own silks. Then she remembered that she had seen at the widow's a light and strong frail basket made of the sea-bent which grew in the sands. This basket would be useful to her: so she would, after all, go up—carry some cockles for Annie, and borrow the basket. She did so, and came away again without awakening the widow.

At first, Lady Carse thought that Annie was right, and that the island was not so dreary, after all. The morning breeze was fresh and strengthening; the waves ran up gaily upon the sands, and leaped against the projecting rocks, and fell back with a merry splash. And the precipices were so fine, she longed for her sketch-book. And the romance of her youth began to revive within her. Here was a whole day for roving. She would somehow make a fire in a cave, and cook for herself. She was sure she could live among these caves; and if she was missing for a considerable time, the Macdonalds would think she had escaped, or was drowned; and she could slip away at last, when some vessel put into the harbour. She stopped and looked round; but on all the vast stretch of waters, there was no vessel to be seen but the sloop in harbour; while on shore there was no human being visible, nor any trace of habitation. The solitude rather pressed on her heart: but she hastened on, and rounded the point which would shut out from her the land view, and prevent her being seen by any one from Macdonald's. She had no fear of her return being cut off by the tide. She had the whole day before her, and could climb the rocks to a safe height at any time.

These were caves indeed! At sight of them her heart was in a sort of tumult very different from any it had experienced for long. She eagerly entered the first, and drew deep breath as the thunder of the waters and the echoes together almost confounded her senses. At the lowest tides there was some depth of water below, in a winding central channel. In the evening how black that channel must be! how solemn the whole place! Now the

low sun was shining in, lighting up every point, and disclosing all the hollows, and just catching a ripple now and then, which, in its turn, made a ripple of light on the roof. And, far in, there was an opening, a gaping chink in the side of the cave, which gave admission to a second rocky chamber.

Lady Carse was bent on reaching this opening; and did so, at last. She could not cross the clear deep water in the channel below her. It was just too wide for a safe leap. But she found a footing over the rocks which confined it; and on she went—now ascending, now descending almost to the water—amidst dancing lights, and rising and falling echoes: on she went, her heart throbbing, her spirits cheered—her whole soul full of a joy which she had not experienced for long. She stepped over the little chasm to which the waters narrowed at last, and, reaching the opening, thrust herself through it.

She seemed to have left light and sound behind her. Dim, cool, and almost silent was the cavern she now stood in. Its floor was thickly strewn with fine sand, conveying the sensation that her own footsteps were not to be heard. Black pillars of rock rose from a still pool which lay in her way, and which she perceived only just in time to prevent her stepping into it. These pillars and other dark masses of rock sprang up and up till her eye lost them in the darkness; and if there was a roof, she could not see it. A drip from above made a splash about once in a minute in the pool; and the murmur from without was so subdued—appeared to be so swallowed up in vastness and gloom—that the minute drop was loud in comparison. Lady Carse lay down on the soft sand, to rest, and listen,

and think—to ponder plans of hiding and escape. All her meditations brought her round to the same point: that three things were necessary to any plan of escape—a supply of food, a boat, and an accomplice. She arose, chilled and hungry, determined to try whether she could not meet with one or all of these this very day.

As she slowly proceeded round the pool, she became aware that it was not so perfectly still as hitherto; and a gurgle of waters grew upon the ear. It was only that the tide was coming up, and that the pool was being fed by such influx as could take place through a few crannies. She perceived that these crannies had let in a glimmering of light which was now sensibly darkened. She had no fear—only the delicious awe which thrills through the spirit on its admission to the extreme privacies of nature. There was some light, and safe opportunity of return by the way she had come. She would not go back till she had tried whether she could get on.

On she went—more than once in almost total darkness—more than once slipping on a piece of wet and weedy rock where she expected to tread on thick sand—more than once growing irritable at little difficulties, as hungry people of better tempers than hers are apt to do in strange places. A surprise awaited her at last. She had fancied she perceived a glimmer of light before her; and she suddenly found herself at the top of a steep bank of sand, at the bottom of which there was an opening—a very low arch—to the outer air. While she was sliding down this bank, she heard a voice outside. She was certain of it. Presently there was a laugh, and the voice again. If she had found

Rollo, there was somebody else too; and if Rollo was not here, there was the more to hope something from.

Now the question was whether she could get through the arch. She pushed her basket through first, and then her own head; and she saw what made her lie still for some little time. The arch opened upon a cove, deep and narrow, between projecting rocks. A small raft rose and fell on the surface of the water; and on the raft stood a man, steadying himself with his legs wide apart, while he held a rope with both hands, and gazed intently upwards. The raft was in a manner anchored; tied with ropes to masses of rock on each side of the cove; but it still pitched so much that Lady Carse thought the situation of the man very perilous; and she, therefore, made no noise, lest she should startle him. She little dreamed how safe was his situation compared with that of the comrade he was watching.

In a short time the man changed his occupation. He relaxed his hold of the rope, fastened it to a corner of the raft, gazed about him like a man of leisure, and then once more looked upwards, holding out his arms as if to catch something good. And immediately a shower of sea-birds began to fall: now one, now three, now one again; down they came, head foremost, dead as a stone. Two fell into the water; but he fished them up with a stick with a noose of hair at the end, and flung them on the heap in the middle of the raft.

When the shower began to slacken, Lady Carse thought it the time to make herself heard. She put her head and shoulders through the low arch, and asked the man if he thought she could get through.

His start at the voice, his bewildered look down the face of the rock, and the scared expression of his countenance when he discovered the face that peeped out at the bottom, amused Lady Carse extremely. She did not remember how unlike her fair complexion and her hair were to those of the women of these islands, nor that a stranger was in this place more rare than a ghost. And as for the man—what could he suppose but that the handsome face that he saw peeping out, laughing, from the base of the precipice was that of some rock spirit, sent perhaps for mischief. However, in course of time, the parties came to an explanation: that is, of all that the lady said, the man caught one word—Macdonald; and he saw that she had a basket of cockles, and knew the basket to be of island manufacture. Moreover, he found, when he ventured to help her out, that her hand was of flesh and blood, though he had never before seen one so slender and white.

When she stood upright on the margin of the creek, what a scene it was! Clear as the undulating waters were, no bottom was visible. Their darkness and depth sent a chill through her frame. Overhead, the projecting rocks nearly shut out the sky, while the little strip that remained was darkened by a cloud of fluttering and screaming sea-birds. The cause of their commotion was pointed out to her. A man whom she could scarcely have distinguished but for the red cap on his head was on the face of the precipice: now appearing still, now moving, she could not tell how, for the rock appeared to her as smooth up there as the wall of a house. But it was not so: there were ledges; and on one of these he stood, plundering the nests of the sea-fowl which were screaming round his head.

“Rollo?” the lady asked, as she turned away, her brain reeling at the sight she had seen.

“Rollo,” replied the man, now entirely satisfied. No spirit would want to be told who any one was.

And now Rollo was to descend. His comrade again stepped upon the raft, pushed out to the middle of the channel, secured the raft, grasped the rope, and steadied himself. Lady Carse thought she could not look: but she glanced up now and then, when there was a call from above, or a question from below; or when there was a fling of the rope, or a pause in the proceedings. When Rollo at last slid down upon the raft, hauled it to shore, and jumped on the rock beside her, he was as careless as a hedger coming home to breakfast, while she was trembling in every limb.

And Rollo was thinking more of his breakfast than of the way he had earned it, or of the presence of a stranger. He was a stout, and now hungry, lad of eighteen, to whom any precipice was no more startling than a ladder is to a builder. And, as his mother had taught him to speak English, and he had on that account been employed to communicate with such strangers as had now and then come to the island during Macdonald's absence, he was little embarrassed by the apparition of the lady. He was chiefly occupied with his pouchful of eggs, there being more than he had expected to find so late in the season. It was all very well, he said, for their provision to-day; but it was a sign that somebody knew this cove as well as themselves, and that it was no longer a property to himself and his comrade.

“How so?” inquired the lady. “How can you possibly tell by the eggs that any one has been here?”

Rollo glanced at his comrade, in a sort of droll assurance that it could be no ghost from the grave, no ghostly inhabitant of a cave, who could require to have such a matter explained. He then, condescendingly, told her that, when the eggs of the eider-duck are taken, she lays more; and this twice over, before giving up in despair. Of course, this puts off the season of hatching; and when, therefore, eggs are found fresh so late in the season, it is pretty plain that some one has been there to take those earlier laid. Rollo seemed pleased that the lady could comprehend this, when it was explained to her. He gave her an encouraging nod, and began to scramble onward over the rocks, his companion being already some paces in advance of him. The lady followed, with her basket, as well as she could; but she soon found herself alone, and in not the most amiable mood at being thus neglected. She had not yet learned that she was in a place where women are accustomed to shift for themselves, and precedence is not thought of, except by the fireside, with aged people or a minister of the Gospel in presence.

She smoothed her brow, however, when she regained sight of the young men. They were on their knees, in the entrance of a cavern, carefully managing a smouldering peat so as to obtain a fire. It was ticklish work; for the peat had been left to itself rather too long; and chips and shavings were things never seen in these parts. A wisp of dry grass, or a few fibres of heather, were made to serve instead; and it was not easy to create with these heat enough to kindle fresh peats. At last, however, it was done; and eggs were poked in, here and there, to roast. The cockles must be roasted,

too ; and two or three little mouse-coloured birds, the young of the eider-duck, were broiled as soon as plucked. So much for the eating. As for the drinking, there was nothing but pure whisky, unless the lady could drink sea-water. Thirsty as she was, she thought of the drip in the cave ; but, besides that it was far to go, and scanty when obtained, she remembered all the slime she had seen, and that she did not know whence that drip came. So she gulped down two or three mouthfuls of whisky, and was surprised to find how little she disliked it, and how well it agreed with her after her walk.

As soon as Rollo could attend to her, she told him where she had spent the night—how she had resolved to live with his mother, and in sight of the harbour—and how she wanted two or more rooms built for her at the end of the widow's cottage, unless, indeed, she could get a boat built instead, to take her over to the main, for which she would engage to pay hereafter whatever should be asked. Rollo told his companion this ; and they both laughed so at the idea of the boat, that the lady rose in great anger, and walked away. Rollo attended her, and pointed to his raft, saying that there was no other such craft as even that in the island ; and people did not think of boats, even in their dreams, though he could fancy that any lady in the south might, for he had heard that boats were common in the south. But, he went on to say, if she could not have a boat, she might have a house.

“ Will you help to build it ? ” asked the lady. “ Will your companion—will all the people you know help me to build it ? ”

“ Why, yes, ” Rollo replied. “ We shall have

to build some sort of a cottage for the minister that is coming—for the minister and his wife; and we may as well——”

“Minister! Is there a minister coming?” cried the lady. “O! thank God, whose servant he is! Thank God for sending me deliverance, as he surely will by these means!”

She had sunk on her knees. Rollo patted her on the shoulder, and said the folk were certainly coming.

What to make of Rollo she did not know. He treated her as if she were a child. He used a coaxing way of talking, explained to her the plainest things before her eyes, and patted her on the shoulder! She drew away, looking very haughtily at him: but he only nodded.

“Why was I not told before that the minister and his wife were coming? Macdonald did not tell me. Your mother did not tell me.”

“They do not know it yet. They seldom know things till I tell them; and I did not want to be kept at home to build a house till I had got some business of my own done.”

He would not tell how he had obtained his information; but explained that it was the custom for a minister to live for some time on each of the outlying islands where there were too few people to retain a constant pastor. This island was too little inhabited to have had a minister on its shores since the chapel had gone to ruin, a hundred years before—but the time was at hand at last. There had been a disappointment in some arrangements in the nearest neighbour islet; and Mr. Ruthven and his wife were appointed to reside here for a year or more, as might appear desirable. Rollo considered

this great news. Children and betrothed persons would be brought hither to be baptized and married—arriving perhaps more than once in the course of the year; and it would be strange if the minister were not, in that time, to be sent for in a boat to bury somebody. Or, perhaps, a funeral or two might come to the old chapel. Some traffic there must be; and that would make it a great year for Rollo. And, to begin with, there would be the house to build; and he might be sent for materials. He should like that, though he did not much fancy the trouble of the building.

After a moment's thought, the lady asked him if he could not keep the secret of the minister's coming till the last possible hour. She would reward him well if he would get the house built as for her. Seeing how precious was the opportunity, she gave Rollo her confidence, showed him how it would tend to satisfy Macdonald if she appeared to be settling herself quietly in the island; whereas, if he knew of the approach of vessels with strangers, he would probably imprison her, or carry her away to some yet wilder and more remote speck in the ocean.—Rollo saw something of her reasons, and said patronizingly,

“Why, you talk like an island woman now. You might almost have lived here, by the way you understand things.”

Yet better did he apprehend her promises of vast rewards, if he would do exactly as she wished. There was an air about her which enabled him to fancy her some queen or other powerful personage: and as it happened to suit him to keep the secret till the last moment, he promised, for himself and his comrade, to be discreet, and obey orders.

This settled, the lady turned homewards, with a basket full of eggs and fish and young birds, and news for the widow that her son was safe, and not far off, and about to come home to try his hand at building a house.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WAITING OF THE WISE.

THE house proceeded well. Maedonald had no express orders about it ; but he had express orders to keep Lady Carse on the island, and, if possible, in a quiet and orderly state of manners. When he saw how completely engrossed she was in the building of this dwelling, and what a close friendship she appeared to have formed with Annie Fleming, he believed that she was a woman of a giddy mind and strong self-will, who might be managed by humouring. If he could assist her in providing herself with a succession of new objects, he hoped that she might be kept from mischief and misery, as a child is by a change of toys. He would try this method, and trust to his chief's repaying him any expenses incurred for the strange lady's sake. So he granted the use of his ponies and his people, —now a man or two,—and now their wives, to bring stones and earth and turf, and to twist heather bands. Once or twice he came himself, and lent a strong hand to raise a corner-stone, and help to lay the hearthstone. The house consisted of two rooms, divided by a passage. If Lady Carse had chosen to admit the idea of remaining after the arrival of the Ruthvens, she would have added a third room : but she had resolved that she would leave the island in the vessel which brought them, or in the next that their arrival would bring :

and she would not dwell for an instant on any doubt of accomplishing her purpose.

So the thick walls rose, and the low roof was on, and the thatch well bound down, and secured moreover with heavy stones, before the autumn storms arrived. And before the hard rains came down, all Macdonald's ponies were one evening seen approaching in a string, laden with peat,—a present to the lady. In the course of the day there was stacked, at the end of her cottage, enough to last for some months. When the widow came out to see it and wish her joy,—for a good stack of well dried peat was the richest of all possessions in that region,—the lady smiled as cheerfully as Annie; not at the peat, however, but at the thought that she should see little or none of it burn. She intended to dispose of her winter evenings far otherwise.

As for the widow, she was thankful now that she had never thought her situation dreary. If, in her former solitude, when her boy was absent, she had murmured at that solitude, her present feelings would have been a rebuke to her. She was not happy now;—so far from it, that her former life appeared, in comparison with it, as happy as she could desire. Perhaps it had been too peaceful, she thought: and she might need some exercise of patience.—It was a great advantage, certainly, for both herself and Rollo, to hear the things the lady could tell of ways of living in other places, and to learn such a variety of knowledge from a person so much better informed than themselves. But then, this knowledge appeared to be all so unsanctified! It did not make the poor lady herself strong in heart and peaceful in spirit. It

was wonderful, and very stirring to the mind, to learn how wise people were who lived in cities, and what great ability was required to conduct the affairs of life where men were gathered together in numbers: but then, these wonders did not seem to impress those who lived in the midst of them. There was no sign that they were watching and praising God's hand working among the faculties of men, as more retired people do in much meaner things,—in the warmth which the eider-duck gives to her eggs by wrapping them in down from her own breast, and the punctuality with which the herring-shoals pass by in May and October, making the sea glitter with life and light as they go. She feared that when people lived out of sight of green pastures and still waters,—and she looked at the moment upon the down on which the goats were browsing, and the fresh-water pool where the dragon-fly hovered for a few hot days in summer,—when men lived out of sight of green pastures and still waters, she feared that they became perplexed in a sort of Babel, where the call of the shepherd was too gentle to be heard. At least, it appeared thus from the effect upon Rollo of the lady's conversation. She had always feared for him the effect of seeing the world, as she remembered the world;—of his seeing it before he had better learned to see God everywhere, and to be humble accordingly: and the conversation he now heard was to him much like being on the mainland,—and even in a town. It had not made him more humble, or more kind, or more helpful;—except indeed to the lady; there was nothing he would not do to help her.

And here Annie sighed and smiled at once, as

the thought struck her that while she was mourning over other people's corruption, she was herself not untouched. She detected herself admitting some dislike to the lady because she so occupied Rollo that he had left off supplying his mother with fishes' livers and seal-fat for oil. The best season had passed :—she had spoken to him several times not to lose the six-weeks-old seals ; but he had not attended to it ; and now her stock of oil was very low ; and the long winter-nights were before her. She must speak to Macdonald to procure her some oil. But very strictly must she speak to herself about this new trouble of discontent. Did she not know that He who appointed her dwelling-place on that height, and who marked her for her life's task by that touch on her heart-strings the night she saw her husband drown, would supply the means ? If her light was to be set on the hill, for men to see from the tossing billows and be saved, it would be taken care of that, as of old, the widow's cruise of oil did not fail.—What *she* had to look to was that the lamp of her soul did not grow dim and go out. How lately was she thanking God for the new opportunities afforded her by the arrival of this stranger ! and now she was shrinking from these very opportunities, and finding fault with everybody before herself !

There was some little truth in this, and it was very natural ; for this kind of trial was new to Annie. But she never yielded to it again :—not even when the trial was such as few would have been able to bear.

As the dark blustering month of November advanced, the widow's rheumatism came on, more severely than ever before. She had given up her

bed to Lady Carse, and, when Rollo was at home, slept on the floor, on some ashes covered with a blanket; the only materials for a bed which she had been able to command, as Rollo had been too busy to get seal-skins, or to go to any distance for heather while it was soft. She had caught cold repeatedly, and was likely to have a bad winter with her rheumatism, however soon the lady might get into her own house, and yield up the widow's bed. One gusty afternoon, when the wet fogs were driving past, Annie waited long for the lady and Rollo to come in to the evening meal. She could not think what detained them next door in such weather; for it was no weather for working,—besides that, it was getting dark. She could not, with her stiff and painful limbs, go out of doors: and when she perceived that her smallest lamp was gone, she satisfied herself that they had some particular work to finish for which they needed light, and would come in when it was done.

But it grew dark, and the wind continued to rise; and they did not appear. They did not mean to appear this night. Macdonald had been informed, at last, from his chief, of the intended arrival of the minister and his lady; had been very angry at the long concealment of the news, and would now, Lady Carse apprehended, keep a careful watch over her, and probably confine her till the expected boats had come and gone. So she and her accomplices had at once repaired to the cave,—a cave which Rollo was sure none of Macdonald's people had discovered,—where for some time past Rollo and his comrade had stored dried fish, such small parcels of oatmeal as they could obtain, and plenty of peat for fuel. There

they were now sitting at supper, over a good fire, kindled in a deep sand which would afford a warm and soft bed;—there they were at supper, while the widow was waiting for them, in pain and anxiety,—and at last in cold and dreariness.

When the fire was low, she rose painfully from her seat, to feed it, and to trim and light the lamp. Alas! there were no peats in the corner. She knew there were plenty at midday: but Lady Carse had, at the last moment, bethought herself that the fuel in the cave might be damp, and had carried off those in the corner, desiring Rollo to bring in more from the stack to dry; and this Rollo had neglected to do. The fire would be quite out in an hour.—Annie saw that she must attempt to get out to the stack. She did attempt it: but the stormy blast and the thick cold drizzle so drove against her that she could not stand it, and could only with difficulty shut the door. She turned to her lamp, to light it while the fire was yet alive. There was but little oil in it. She reached out her hand for the oilcan. It was not there. Rollo had considered that the lady would want light in the cave: Lady Carse had considered that the widow might for one night make a good fire serve her purposes; and so the oilcan was gone to the same place with the peats.

Annie sank down on her seat, almost subdued. Not quite subdued, however, even by this threat of the baffling of the great object of her life. Not quite subdued, for her heart and her ear were yet open to the voices of nature. The scream of a sea-bird reached her, as the creature was swept by on the blast.

“That is for me,” she said to herself, the blood

returning to her stricken heart and pale cheek. "How God sends his creatures to teach us at the moment when we need His voice! I have seen the cormorant sitting in his hole in wintry weather,—sitting there for days together, hungry and cold, trying now and then to get out, and driven back by such a blast as he cannot meet,—by such a blast as this. And then he sits on patiently, and moves no more till the wind lulls and the sky clears. And if his wing is weak at first, it soon strengthens. The blast drives me back to-night; but I, who have thoughts to rest upon, may well bear what a winged creature can. That screamer was sent to me. I wonder what has become of it. I hope it is not swept quite away."

But it would not do to sit thinking while the fire was just out, and the lamp likely to burn only an hour. She lighted the lamp with difficulty,—with a beating heart and trembling hands, lest the last available spark should go out first. But the wick caught; and the lamp was placed in the window, sending, as it seemed to Annie, a gleam through the night of her own mind, as well as through that of the stormy air. It quickened her invention and her hopes.

"There is an hour yet," thought she. "I am sure it will burn an hour; and something may be sent by that time."

She took off her cotton handkerchief, tore off the hem, and unravelled out the cotton as quickly as she could, and twisted it into a wick which she thought she could fix by a skewer across a tin cup from which Rollo drank his whisky when at home. She brought down from the chimney and looked over rapidly all the oily parts of the fish, and every

fatty portion of the dried meat hung up in the smoke for winter use; and these she made a desperate endeavour to melt in the flame of her lamp. She wrung out a few drops,—barely enough to soak her wick. This would not burn five minutes. She persevered to the last moment,—saying to herself,

“Not once for these seventeen years since I saw my husband drown, has there been a dark night between this window and the sea. Not once has my spark been put out: and I will not think it now. God can kindle fire where he pleases. I have heard tell that people in foreign countries have seen a lightning-shaft dart down into a forest, and make a tree blaze up like a torch. God has his own ways.”

All the while her hands wrought so busily that she scarcely felt their aching in the cold of the night.—But now her new wick was wanted, for the old was going out.—It blazed up, but she saw it must soon be gone. She broke up her old stool, all shattered as it was already. Some splinters she stuck one after another into the lamp; and then she burned the larger pieces in the hearth, saying to herself incessantly, as if for support, “God has his own ways.”

But the rising and falling flame became more and more uncertain; and at last, very suddenly, it went quite out. There was not, in another minute, a spark left.

For a while there was silence in the cottage, now dark for the first time since Annie was a widow. She crept to her cold bed; and there, under cover of the strange darkness, she shed a few tears. But soon she said to herself, “God

has his own ways of kindling our spirits as well as the flame of a lamp. Perhaps by humbling me, or by changing my duty when I became too fond of it, he may warm my heart to new trust in him. His will be done! But he will let me pray that there may be none in the harbour this night who may drown, or be buffeted in the storm because He is pleased to darken my light."

Before she had quite calmed her heart with this prayer, there was noise at a little distance, and red gleams on the fitful mists which drove past the window: and then followed a loud knocking at her door.

It was Macdonald with his people, come to see whether the lady was safe. He looked perplexed and uneasy when Annie told him that she could not think that the lady could be otherwise than safe, now she knew the places about the island so well, and was so fearless. It often happened that she was absent for a night and day; and no doubt the storm had this night detained her and her companions in some sheltered place,—some place where, she had reason to believe, they had fire and light.—As for herself, when Annie saw the torch that Macdonald carried, her eyes glistened in the blaze, and she said once more in the depth of her mind,

"Surely God has his own ways."

Macdonald was very wrathful when he learned by questioning Annie how it was that her house was dark. As he hastily kindled the peats he brought in from the stack, he muttered that it seemed to have pleased God to afflict the island again with a witch, after all the pains that were taken twenty years before, as he well remembered,

to clear the place of one. 'This woman must be a witch. . . .

"Nay," said Annie. "I take her to be sent to us for good. Let us wait and learn."

"Good? What good?"

"It is through her, you see, that I find how kind a neighbour you are, at need," replied Annie; not adding aloud what she was thinking of,—how this night had proved that God brings help at the least likely moments.

"She is a witch," Macdonald persisted. "No power short of that could have quenched your lamp, and drawn away your only son from honouring his parent to be a slave to a stranger."

As Annie could not at the moment speak, Macdonald went on raising a flame meantime by flapping the end of his plaid:

"It is the chapel, I know. Things have never gone well for any length of time here since the chapel fell completely down, and the bleat of the kid came out from where the psalm ought to sound. We must apply ourselves to build up the chapel; and, as there is a minister coming, we may hope to be released from witches and every kind of curse."

"There will be little room for any kind of curse," thought Annie, "when the minister has taught us to 'be kindly affectioned one to another,' and not to make our little island more stormy with passions than it ever is with tempests of wind and hail."

"There, now! there is a good fire for you," said Macdonald, rising from his knees: "and I won't ask you, Annie, what was in your mind as the blaze made your eyes shine. I won't ask you,

because you might tell me that I am in need of the minister, to make me merciful to a banished lady.—Ah! your smile shows that that is what you were thinking of. But I can tell you this;—she is a wicked woman. Her father committed murder; and she is quite able and willing to do the same thing. So I must go and find her, and take care that her foot is set in no boat but mine.”

“Yours?”

“Yes. I must carry her out of the way of all boats but mine. This island was chosen for such a purpose, and now”

“And now,” said Annie, “if the lady is afflicted with such hardness of heart, is it not cruel to take her away from God’s word and worship, just when there is a minister coming? O! Macdonald, what would you do to one who should carry away your poor sick little Malcolm to St. Kilda, just when your watching eye caught sight of an eastward sail, and you knew it was the physician coming;—sent, moreover, for Malcolm’s sake? What would you think then, Macdonald?”

“I should think that if Sir Alexander was in it, there could be nothing done, and there ought to be nothing said. And Sir Alexander is in this. So I must go.”

While Macdonald and his people were beating about among the coves, as morning drew on, Lady Carse and Rollo slipped up to the house, partly to secure a few more comforts that they had a mind for, and partly to obtain a wide view over the sea, and a certainty whether any boats were in sight.

“Have you brought up my oilcan, Rollo?” asked his mother. “If not, you must go for it, and never again touch it without my leave.”

“ I took it,” said Lady Carse; “ and I cannot spare it.”

“ It cannot be spared from this room, my Lady. It never left this room before but by my order; and it never must again.”

“ It shall never leave the place where it now is,” declared Lady Carse, reddening. “ I threw myself on your hospitality, and you grudge me light in the night,—you who are housed in a cottage of your own, with a fire and everything comfortable about you:—that is, every comfort that a poor woman like you knows how to value. You think yourself very religious, I am aware; and I rather believe you think yourself charitable too; and you grudge me your oilcan when there is no one thing on earth you can do for me but lend it.”

“ Your way of thinking is natural, my Lady, till you better know me and my duty. But to-day I must say that the oilcan is mine, and I cannot lend it. You will please desire Rollo to bring it to me.”

“ I know well enough about you and your duty, as you call it. I know your particularity about a fancy of your own. I know well enough how obstinate you are about it,—and how selfish,—that you would sacrifice me to your whim about your duty, and your husband, and all that set of notions. And I know more:—I know what it is to have a husband, and that you ought to be thankful that yours was gone before he could play the tyrant over you. You pretend to speak with authority because this cottage is yours, and your precious oilcan, and your rotten old bedstead. But besides that I can teach you many things, you may be assured I can pay you for more oil than I shall

burn to the end of my days, and for more sleeps than I hope ever to have on your old bed. You need not fear but that I shall pay for everything;—pay more money than you ever saw in your life.”

“ Money will not do, Madam. I must have my oilcan.—Rollo will fetch it.—And you will lie down, my Lady;—lie down and rest on my old bed, without thinking of money or of anything but ease to your head and your weary heart. Lie down in safety here, Madam; for your head and your heart are aching sadly.”

“ What do you know about my head and heart aching? ”

“ By more signs than one. When any one is hunted like the deer upon the hills. . . . ”

Lady Carse groaned.

“ That is only for a while, however,” said Annie tenderly. “ When there is peace of mind, there is no one to hunt us,—no one to hurt us. We abide,—here or anywhere;—for the shadow of the Almighty is everywhere. No one can hunt us from it, nor hurt us within it. And I assure you, my Lady, this is the place of all places for peace of mind.”

“ I hurt you just now, however,” said the lady; “ and I left you little peace of mind last night.”

“ If so, it must be my own fault,” said Annie, cheerfully. “ But never mind that! I never have any troubles now hardly; and you, Madam, have so many, and such sad ones! ”

“ That is true,” said Lady Carse, as burning tears forced their way. “ You never knew—you cannot conceive—such misery as mine.”

Annie kissed the hand which was wet with those

scalding tears, and laid her own hand on the head which was shaken on the pillow with sobs.

After a time, the lady murmured out,

“ This seems very childish : but it is so long,—so long since any one....since I met with any tenderness,—any affection from any one ! ”

“ Is that it ? ” said the widow, cheerfully. “ Well,—this is a poor place enough ; and we are no companions for anybody beyond ourselves : but what you speak of is ours to give. That you may always depend on here.”

“ In spite of anything I may say or do ? You see how hasty I am at times. Will you love me and caress me, through anything I may say or do ? ”

“ No doubt,” replied Annie, smiling. “ It will be the happiest way if you constrain us to love and cherish you as your due. But if not, these are charities that God has put into every hand that is reached out to him, that the very humblest and poorest may have the best of alms to give.”

“ Alms ! ” sighed the lady. She shook off the kind hand that was upon her aching brow, for the thought struck upon her heart that she was a destitute beggar for those smallest offices of kindness and courtesy which she had not affections or temper to reciprocate or claim.

CHAPTER IX.

THE COVE.

ROLLO brought word that Macdonald and his people had left the eastern caves, and were now exploring the large northern one called Asdrafil. It was time the lady was returning to her hiding-place.

“O dear!” exclaimed she. “May I not rest under a roof for one night? Will Macdonald come here again so soon?”

The widow had little doubt he would. He would be popping in at all times of the day or night till he could learn where his prisoner was. She could not advise the lady to stay here, if she wished to remain on the island till the minister came.

“I must,” said Lady Carse. “But I dread that cave. I hate it, with its echoes that startle one every moment, and the rough walls that look so strangely in the red light of the fire. I hate it. But,” she continued impetuously, “no matter! I hate this place” (looking round with disgust). “I hate every place that I ever was in. I wish I was dead. I wish I had never been born. Now don’t look at me so piteously. I won’t be pitied. I can’t bear to be pitied: and do you think I will let you pity me? No, indeed, I may have my own troubles. God knows I have troubles enough. But I would not change places with you—no, no.

for all else that God or man could give me. Now what are you smiling at? Woman, do you mean to insult my misfortunes? I am brought low indeed, if I am to be smiled at by a hag in a desert,—I who once. . . . O! I see; you don't choose to yield me the small respect of listening to what I say."

Annie was now looking round her cottage to see what she could send down to render the lady more comfortable in her retreat. She tried to absorb her own attention in this business till Lady Carse should have exhausted her anger and become silent. But Lady Carse once again seized the oilcan.

"Pardon me, Madam," said Annie, "I cannot spare that, as you know. Rollo is carrying some things that I hope may make you comfortable. If you see anything else that you wish for, you shall have it—anything but my lamp and my oil."

"The oil is the only thing I want; and a small matter it is for me, who had dozens of wax-lights burning in my house at Edinburgh, and will have dozens more before I die."

"Your fire must serve you, Madam. I give you what I have to bestow. My light is not mine to give: it belongs to wanderers on the sea. You cannot think, Madam, of taking what belongs, as I may say, neither to you nor me."

Lady Carse had that in her countenance at this moment which alarmed the widow for her light; and she therefore desired her son, with authority, to relieve the lady of the oilcan, and trim the lamp ready for night.

Lady Carse, setting her teeth, and looking as malicious as an ill-bred cur, said, that if the light belonged to nobody here, nobody else should have

the benefit of it ; and attempted to empty the oil upon the hearth. This was more than Rollo was disposed to permit. He seized her arm with no gentle grasp, and saved all the oil but a few drops which blazed among the peats. He moreover told the lady, with an air of superiority, that he had almost begun to think she had as much wit as the islanders ; but that he now saw his mistake ; and she must manage her own affairs. He should stay with his mother to-night.

It was his mother who, rebuking his incivility, desired him to attend upon the lady. It was his mother who, when Lady Carse burst away from them, and said that she would be followed by nobody, awoke in Rollo something of the feeling which she herself entertained.

“ Carry down these things,” she said. “ It is too true, as she says, that every place is hateful to her ; and that is the more reason why we should do what we can to make some comfort in the place she is in.”

“ But she says such things to you, mother ! I don't want to hear any more such things.”

“ When people are in torment, Rollo, they do not know what they say. And she has much to torment her, poor lady ! Now go ; and let us try to hide her from Macdonald. If she and the minister can have speech of each other, I trust she may become more settled in mind. You know God has made his creatures to differ one from another. There are some that sit all the more still in storms ; and there are others that are sadly bewildered in tempests : but, if one ray of God's sun is sent to them, it is like a charm. They stop and watch it ; and when it spreads about them, it

seems to change their nature : they lie down and bask in it, and find content. It may be so with this lady, if the minister gives her a glimpse of light from above."

"She shall not be carried off, if David and I can hide her," declared Rollo. "One of us must watch the Macdonalds, while the other entertains the lady."

"While she entertains you, you mean," said Annie, smiling. "She has many wonderful things to tell to such as we are."

"Not more than we have to tell her. Why, mother, she knows no more."

"Well, well," said his mother, smiling ; "you cannot do wrong in amusing her to the best of your ability, till she can see the minister, and hear better things. So go, my son."

Rollo trimmed the lamp ; saw that his mother was provided with fuel and water, and departed ; leaving her maternal heart cheered, so that her almost bare cottage was like a palace to her. She was singing when Macdonald put his head in, as he said, to bid her good night, but in fact to see if Lady Carse had come home.

David and Rollo acted in turn as scouts ; and from their report it appeared that, though the minister's boat had not shown itself, there was a blockade of the eastern caves. The lady's retreat was certainly suspected to be somewhere in this part of the shore ; for some of Macdonald's people were always in sight. Now and then, a man, or a couple of women, came prying along the rocks ; and once two men took shelter in a cave which adjoined that in which the trembling lady was sitting, afraid to move, and almost to breathe, lest

the echoes should betray her. The entrance to her retreat was so curiously concealed by projections of the rock, that she had nothing to fear but from sound. But she could not be sure of this; and she would have extinguished her fire by heaping sand upon it, and have left herself in total darkness in a labyrinth which was always sufficiently perplexing, if Rollo had not held her hand. He stepped cautiously through the sand to the nearest point to the foe, listened awhile, and then smiled and nodded to Lady Carse, and seemed wonderfully delighted. This excited her impatience so much that it seemed to her that the enemy would never decamp. She was obliged to control herself; but by the time she might speak she was very irritable. She told Rollo not to grin and fidget in that manner, but to let her know his news.

“Great news!” Rollo declared. The sloop which was to bring the minister and his wife was to lie-to this very night, in a deep cove close at hand; and the reason for its coming here, instead of into the harbour, was—the best of reasons for the lady—that Macdonald had fears that the Macleods who manned the vessel would be friendly to his prisoner. So the minister and his party were to be landed in the sloop’s yawl; and the sloop was to be quietly brought into the cove after dark, that the lady, supposed to be still on the island, might not have any opportunity of getting on board.

This did appear a most promising opportunity of deliverance. The sloop came round when expected; and, soon after she was moored, Rollo and David went on their raft, and spoke from it to a man who appeared to be in command, and who

was, after some time, persuaded to think that he could, for sufficient payment, go so far out of his way as to land a lady passenger on the main—the lady being in anxiety about her family, and able to pay handsomely for an early opportunity of joining them. The negotiation was rather a long one, as some of the points were difficult to arrange; and the master of the vessel appeared somewhat careless about the whole matter. But at last Lady Carse's anxious ear heard the slight splash of the raft approaching through the water; and then the tall figures of the young men were dimly seen between her and the sky. Her tongue was so parched that she could not speak the question which swelled in her heart.

“Come,” said Rollo, aloud. “The master will land you on the main. You had better get on board now, before the sea roughens. Come, they are looking out for you.”

Lady Carse endeavoured to make haste; but her limbs would hardly support her. Her companions lifted her upon the raft, and one held her steady while the other paddled. Strong arms were ready on board the sloop to hoist her up and carry her to a heap of plaids, made into a sort of bed on deck. In another moment she sprang up, saying that she must speak to her companions one more word. A sailor who stood over her held her back; but she declared that she must thank those who had rendered her a great service. At the bidding of some one who spoke in Gaelic, the sailor withdrew his opposition, and she tottered to the side of the vessel, called to Rollo, desired him to give her love to his mother, and promised that he and David should find that she was not ungrateful.

Rollo and his comrade leaped ashore with a comfortable feeling that their business was all achieved; but yet with some little regret at losing the excitements of their late employment, and of the lady's presence and conversation. They talked her over while eating their suppers, wondered what rewards she would send, and how angry Macdonald would be; and they were about to lie down to sleep, when the night air was rent by such a scream as they had never heard. They ran out upon the rocks, and there they heard from the sloop shriek upon shriek.

"What is it?" exclaimed David. "They are murdering her!"

"No," said Rollo, after a pause. "They may be up to that, if this is a trick; but they would not do it here, nor so soon. They could do it more safely between this and St. Kilda, with a rope and heavy stone. No—they are not murdering her, whoever they may be."

"What then? Who are they?"

"It may be a trick; and that would put the lady in a great passion—and when she is in a passion, let me tell you, not all the birds in the face of this rock can make more noise. I am not sure, but I think that is a passionate scream."

"I wish it would leave off," said David, turning away. "I don't like it."

"If you don't like it," said Rollo, "I should hardly think she can. I must see about it. I think it is a trick, and that she is in a passion."

It was a trick from beginning to end. It was Macdonald's sloop; and Macdonald himself was on board, prepared to carry his prisoner to St. Kilda. The conversation overheard by Rollo in

the cavern was a trick. A similar conversation had been held that day in every cave known to Macdonald along that part of the shore, in hopes of some one version being overheard by the lady's accomplices. She had fallen into the trap very easily.

“And now,” said Macdonald to a clansman, “I have nearly done with the business. We have only to land her in St. Kilda; and then it will be the Macleod's affair. I shall be glad to have done with the witch. I have no wish to carry people anywhere against their wishes; and I never would, if Sir Alexander Macdonald were not in it. But I shall have done with the business presently.”

CHAPTER X.

WHICH REFUGE?

MACDONALD'S self-congratulations were premature. He had more uneasiness to undergo about the lady than he had suffered yet. When her screams of rage had sunk into sobs and moans, and these again had been succeeded by silence, he had left her undisturbed to cry herself to sleep. At daylight he had gone to take a look, but she had, as he supposed, muffled herself up in the plaids provided for her, so as to cover her head, and thus conceal her face. But it soon after appeared that these plaids had nothing under them—the lady was not there.

No one had seen her move; and it must have been done in the thickest darkness of the night. One man had heard a splash in the water alongside. A cotton handkerchief, which she had worn on her head, was found floating. It was to be feared that the lady had drowned herself. After searching about in the neighbourhood all day, Macdonald departed in his vessel, leaving a man to watch, in case of the body being thrown up among the rocks. He had now no doubt of her death; and with a heavy heart he went to confide this event—unfortunate for him, whether so or not for any one else—first to friends on the island, and next to his chief. He met the minister on his landing, and took the opportunity of whispering his news to

some of those who came down to greet the pastor, to his own wife, and to Annie Fleming, desiring them not to inform the pastor, without his permission, that such a person as Lady Carse had been among them. Then he set sail for Skye, to tell Sir Alexander, with what face he might, that the poor lady would trouble them no more. It would have been a vast relief to him to have anticipated the way in which his chief would receive the news—how he would say that a great perplexity was thus solved—that no harm could ensue, as the lady was buried so long ago at Edinburgh—and that he had himself many times repented having gone into the affair, and that he never would, but for political and party reasons, and that he was heartily glad now to be quit of it, in any way—to say nothing of this being, after all, a happy event for the wretched lady herself and all belonging to her.

Meantime, Lady Carse was not yet out of their way. She had still voice to utter political secrets, and temper all eager to punish her foes. She had slipped away in the dark, thrown herself overboard when she found Rollo below, got drenched with sea-water and bruised against the rocks, but was safe in hiding again.

Rollo's trouble was, that she laughed so heartily and so incessantly for some time, that there was danger of her merriment betraying her. He told her at last that he must try if she would leave off laughing when left to herself. If she could not, she would then, at any rate, cause no one but herself to be taken. He should go by a way of his own to a point whence he could look out and see what was doing at sea and ashore.

When he reappeared, it was with a face which

would have stopped any laughter on the side of the lady, if the laughter had not stopped of itself long before. She must not hope to escape by the minister's boat. Macdonald had so managed his plot as to allure the lady into his boat just when she should have been attempting to get on board the other. It was too late now.

The lady would not be finally convinced of this till, by Rollo's assistance, she had reached the spot whence she could observe the facts for herself. The knowledge that there was a watch set below, who would not fail to take her alive, though his affair was to pick up her dead body, kept her from yielding to audible grief; but never had she been more convulsed with passion. She pulled up the heather by handfuls. She dashed her head against the ground, till Rollo restrained her.

On the dun wintry sea a vessel was sailing northwards. It had deposited the pastor and his lady, and had actually passed and repassed the very shore where she had been concealed. The long looked-for vessel had come and gone. Another was sailing eastwards, in the direction she longed to go. This was Macdonald's; and, seeing that it was going to Skye or the main, she now bitterly lamented having left it. She would not believe a word about the intention to carry her to St. Kilda. She would rather believe her own eyes, and passionately condemned herself for her haste in returning to this dreary island.

Rollo next turned her attention to the little procession which appeared upon the hills, bringing the pastor and his wife to their new abode. She looked that way; she saw the group ascending the hill—a sight so unusual in this place, that Rollo

was much excited about it; but her eyes kept filling with tears, and she was so heart-sick that she could not bear any thoughts but of her own troubles. She desired Rollo to leave her. She wanted to be alone; nobody had any feeling for her; people might go and amuse themselves; all she wanted was to live and die alone.

Rollo knew that she could not do that; but he wished to go where others were going—said to himself that the lady would be the better for being left to herself for a while, and left her accordingly. He first asked her whether he should help her down to her cave, but she made no answer; so he walked off, leaving her lying on the heather in a cold and dreary place.

She did not feel the cold, and she was too dreary within to be sensible of the desolation without. How deserted she felt as she saw Rollo walking away, quickening his pace to a run when he reached the down! It might be said that she was without a hope in heaven or on earth, but that passion always hopes for its own gratification—always expects it, in defiance of all probability, and in opposition to all reason. This is one chief mode in which the indulgence of any kind of passion is corrupting. It injures the integrity of the faculties and the truthfulness of the mind, inducing its victims to trust to chances instead of likelihood, and to dwell upon extravagances till they become incapable of seeing things as they are.

So Lady Carse now presently forgot that she was alone on a hill in a far island of the Hebrides, with no means of getting away, and no chance of letting any friend know that she was not buried long ago—and her imagination was busy in London.

She fancied herself there, and, if once there, how she would accomplish her revenge! She imagined herself talking to the minister, and repeating to him the things her husband had written and said against himself and the royal family. She imagined herself introduced to the king, and telling into his anxious ear the tidings of the preparations made for driving him from the throne and restoring the exiled family. She imagined the list made out of the traitors to be punished, at the top of which she would put the names of her own foes—her husband first, and Lord Lovat next. She imagined the king's grateful command to her to accompany his messengers to Scotland, that she might guide and help them to seize the offenders. She clasped her hands behind her head in a kind of rapture when she pictured to herself the party stealing a march upon her formal husband, presenting themselves before him, and telling him what they came for—marking, and showing him how they marked, his deadly paleness, perhaps by making courteous inquiries about his health. She feasted her fancy on scenes in the presence of her old acquaintance, Duncan Forbes, when she would distress him by driving home her charges against the friends of his youth, and by appeals to his loyalty which he could not resist. She pictured to herself the trials and the sentences—and then, the executions—her slow driving through the streets in her coach, in her full triumph—people pointing her out all the way as the lady who was pretended to be dead and buried, but who had come back, in favour with the king, to avenge him and herself at once on their common enemies. She wondered whether Lord Lovat's cool assurance would give way at

such a moment—she almost feared not—almost shrank already from the idea of some wounding gibe—frowned and clenched her hands while fancying what it would be, and then smiled at the thought of how she would smile, and bow an eternal farewell to the dying man, reminding him of her old promise to sit at a window and see his head fall.

But the astonishment to all Edinburgh would be when she should look on triumphantly to see her husband die. He had played the widower in sight of all Edinburgh, and now it would be seen how great was the lie, and nobody could dispute that the widowhood was hers. She hoped that he would turn his prim figure and formal face her way, that she might make him too an easy bow, showing how she despised the hypocrite, and how completely he had failed in breaking her spirit. She hoped she should be in good looks at that time, not owning the power of her enemies by looking worn and haggard. She must consider her appearance a little more than she had done lately, in view of this future time. Her being somewhat weather-browned would not matter; it would be rather an advantage, as testifying to her banishment; but she must be in comfortable plight, and for this purpose . . .

Here her meditations were cut short by the approach of some people. She heard a pony's feet on the rock, and caught sight of a woman's head, wrapped in a plaid, as the party mounted directed towards her. It was too late for escape—and there was no need. The woman on the pony was Annie; and nobody else was there but Rollo.

“The wonder is that you are not frozen,” said Rollo, “if you have been lying here all this time.

You look as red in the face, and as warm as if you had been by the fire below, in the snug sand. And that is where we must go now directly; for Mother cannot stand the cold up here. She would come, as it happened she could have one of Macdonald's ponies to-day. Well, I cannot but think how you could keep yourself warm, unless you are a witch, as Macdonald says you are."

"It is the mother's heart in her, Rollo, that keeps out the cold and the harm," said Annie. "It may be a wonder to you; for how should you know what it is to have had a hope of seeing one's children, to have dreamed of nothing else, waking or sleeping, and then to find it nothing but a dream. See her now, Rollo, as the cold comes over her heart. The heart can live warm on its own thoughts, when it is chilling to hear another voice speak of them."

Lady Carse was now very pale. She had once said, and then fully believed it, that she had no shame. It was long since she had felt shame. She felt it now, when it struck her that during all her long reveries about her escape and her restoration to the world, not one thought of her children had entered into the imagery of her dream. Like all people of strong passions, she had taken for granted that there was something grand and fine in the intensity of her feelings. Now, for a moment, the clear mirror of Annie's mind was held up before her own, and she saw herself as she was. For one instant she perceived that she was worthy of her husband's detestation. But she was not one to tolerate painful and humbling ideas long. She recurred to her unequalled wrongs, and was proud and comforted. She walked down to her retreat

without looking behind her, leaving Rollo to tether the pony, and help his mother down as he could.

When Annie entered the cave, the drops were standing on her face, so great had been the pain to her rheumatic limbs on descending to the shore.

“But,” said she, as she sank down on the sand by the smouldering fire, “I could not but come, when I heard from Rollo that you were still breathing God’s air.”

“Do you mean that that was good news or bad?”

“O! good! Surely good news. At first, for a moment after Macdonald told me you were drowned in the night, I felt thankful that your troubles were over. But I soon saw it the right way; and when Rollo whispered where you were . . .”

“What do you mean by seeing it the right way? How do you know that your first feeling was not the right one? I am sure it was the kindest to me. You think yourself religious, and so you ought to be glad when an unhappy person is ‘where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.’”

Annie did not reply. She was looking at the fire, and by its light it might be seen that tears were gathering in her eyes.

“Ah!” said the irritable lady, “you, and such as you, who think you abide in the Scriptures so that nothing can move you; what becomes of you when you are answered by Scripture?”

“I do not feel myself answered,” Annie quietly replied.

“O! indeed!”

“I feel what you said out of Scripture to be quite true; and that it is a great blessing that God has set the quiet grave before our eyes for such as

can find no other rest. But I would not forget that there is another and a better rest, without waiting for the grave."

"You are so narrow, Annie! You judge of everybody by yourself!"

"That is a great danger, I know," Annie agreed. "And I cannot speak from my own knowledge of being troubled by the wicked. But I have read and heard much of good men who were buffeted by the wicked for the best part of their lives, and at last got over being troubled by it, and more than that."

"Ah! gloried in it, no doubt. Every one is proud of something; and they were proud of that."

"Some such I fear there may have often been, Madam; but I was not thinking of those that could fall into such a snare as being proud of the ill-will of their brethren. I was thinking of some who felt the ill opinion of their brethren to be very humbling, and who humbled themselves to bear it. Then in time they had comfort in forgiving their enemies, and at last they grew fit for a sweeter pleasure still which yet remained. Not that, as I believe, they spoke of it, unless at moments when the joy would speak for itself; but then it has been known to burst forth from the lips of the persecuted—from some as cruelly persecuted as you, Madam, that of all the thrillings that God's spirit makes in men's hearts, there is none so sweet as the first stirrings of the love of enemies."

There was no answer, and Annie went on.

"I could believe that there is no love so altogether good—at least for us here. It is as yearning as that of a mother for her child, and as tender as that of lovers; and I should say, more holy than either,

for theirs is natural to them in their mortal life, though it may be the purest part of it; the other love is an instinct belonging to the immortal life, a tongue of fire, sent down upon the head of a chosen one here and there, gifting them with the language of angels, to tell us on this side the grave what we shall find beyond. One must see that to such as these the wicked have ceased from troubling, and their weariness has long sunk into rest without help from death."

Lady Carse sighed.

"This was why I was glad, Madam, to hear that death had not overtaken you yet. If you may enter into a living rest which we may see, that will, under God's blessing, be better than the blank rest of going away from your enemies, when their old wrongs may be still in your heart, making death a stinging serpent instead of a guiding dove."

Some sweet old words here occurred to Lady Carse, linked with a sweet old psalm tune—words of longing to have wings like a dove, to flee away and be at rest. She murmured these words; and they brought softening tears.

"You see, Madam," said Annie, "your nest is made for you. You have been permitted to flee away from your enemies; now you are not to have wings, for the sails of the vessels are out of sight, and this makes it plain that here is to be your nest. It is but a stormy place to abide in, to be sure; but if Christ be sought, he is here to command peace, and the winds and the sea obey him."

"I cannot stay here," sobbed Lady Carse. "I cannot give up my hopes and my efforts—the only aim of my life."

"It is hard," said the widow, with starting tears.

“The last thing that a mother can give up,—the very last thing she can lay freely into God’s hand is her yearning for her children. But you will. . .”

“It is not my children that I most want. You say falsely that they are the last to be given up. There is . . .”

“‘Falsely!’” cried Rollo, springing to his feet. “My mother speak falsely! If you dare . . .”

“Gently, my boy,” said Annie. “We have not heard what the lady means.”

“Be quiet, Rollo,” said Lady Carse. “Your mother speaks falsely as regards me; but I do not say that it is not after her own kind that she speaks. If God gives me to see my children, I will thank him devoutly; but there is another thing that I want more—revenge on all my enemies, and on my husband first.”

Rollo looked breathlessly at his mother. Her face was calm; but he could see in the dim red light its expression of infinite sorrow. She asked her son to help her to rise and go.

“I came,” said she to Lady Carse, “to intreat you to come among us, and rest in a spirit of surrender to God, on his clear showing that he chooses this to be your abiding place; and one reason for my coming was to tell you that the minister has brought his children, lest the sight of a child’s face should move you too suddenly. But I see that your thoughts are on other things; and that your spirit of surrender has yet to be prayed for. Next Sabbath, we are to have worship once more, and . . .”

“Where?”

“In the old chapel, if it can be enclosed by that time. If not, we must wait another week: but I

think it will be done. It needs but a word, Madam, and the minister will ask all our prayers for one under affliction”

“By no means. I forbid you to speak of me, in one way or another, to the minister or his wife. I insist on my wishes being observed in this.”

“Certainly, Madam. It is not for us to interfere with your plans.”

“Then go; go, both of you: and do not come near me without my leave. I want to be alone—I want to be at rest; that is”

“Ay—at rest,” said Annie, half aloud. She was thinking that there would be prayers from one heart at least in the chapel for peace to a troubled spirit.

And she did not wait till the Sabbath to pray. As, assisted by her son, she painfully ascended to the heights, she saw the birds fly in and out, and hover round on the face of the precipice, as at a bidding she did not hear, she could not but silently ask that God would send his dove to harbour in the hollow of this rock with one who sorely needed a visitation of his peace.

CHAPTER XI.

FOLDING THE FLOCK.

AFTER the busiest week known in the island by anybody living there, the Sabbath-day came in, calm and mild. The winters, however stormy, were never very severely cold in this sea-beaten spot. It was seldom that ice was seen; and it never was more than half an inch thick. When, as on this Sunday, the wind was lulled and the sky was clear, the climate was as mild as in spring on the mainland. As soon as the aspect of the sunrise showed the experienced that the day would be fair, busy hands moved into the old roofless chapel the pulpit and benches which the pastor had brought with him—the pulpit being a mere desk of unpainted wood, and the benches of the roughest sort. For these the interior space of the old building had been cleared during the week; the floor was trodden hard and even; the walls were so far repaired as to make a complete enclosure; and some rough stones were placed as steps whereby to enter the burying-ground. Some willing hands had done more—had cleared the burying-ground of stones, so that the graves, though sunk, and unmarked by any memorial but a rough and broken headstone here and there, could be distinguished by an eye interested in searching out the dead of a century ago. Another week, if sufficiently fair, was to see the walls finished and the roof on: and afterwards would be

discharged the pious task of inclosing the burying-ground, and preparing room for those whom death would lay to rest in their own island. While the minister remained here, no more of the dead would be carried over the sea to some place where there was a pastor to commit them to the grave. Room was to be secured for the graves of the fifty people who were now living on the island, and for their children after them: and to all the inhabitants the island appeared a better place when this arrangement was made.

In the weak sunlight of that Sunday morning appeared gay groups of people, all excited with the great thought that they were going to the kirk. They were wonderfully well-clad. How such clothes could come out of such dwellings would have been a marvel to any stranger. Festival days were so rare that a holiday dress lasted for many years. The women's cloth coats fitted at any age; and the caps with gay ribbons and bright cotton handkerchiefs did not wear out. On this remarkable day all wore their best; and a pretty sight it was to see the whole fifty people drawing towards the chapel, as the pastor, his wife, and two children issued from their lowly abode to meet the flock for the first time.

Presently, the island might have appeared deserted. Far round as the eye could reach, not a human being was visible outside the chapel. But something was heard which told that the place was not only inhabited but Christianized. The slow psalm rose into the still air. Every one who could speak could sing a psalm. It was a practice lovingly kept up in every house. Some voices were tremulous, and a few failed; but this was from

emotion. The strongest was Annie's; for hers was the most practised. It was her wont to sing some of the many psalms she knew on summer days, when she sat at work on the platform of her house, and on winter nights, when Rollo was away. Now that she was once more joining in social worship, her soul was joyful; and she sang strong and clear—perhaps the more so for the thought of the one absent person, pining in the cavern on the shore, or looking from afar, in desolation of heart, at the little throng who came privileged to worship. Perhaps Annie's voice might unconsciously rise as if to reach the lonely one, and invite her to come to the house of God, and seek rest. However this might be, Annie's tones so animated some hearts and strengthened some voices as that the psalm might be, and was, heard a long way off. It reached an unwilling ear, and drew forward reluctant steps. The links of old association are, however, the strongest of chains; and no charm is so magical as that of religious emotion. Lady Carse was drawn nearer and nearer, in hope of hearing another psalm, till the solemn tones of prayer reached her; and presently she was crouching under the wall outside, weeping like a sinner who dares not knock at the gate of heaven.

Before the service was quite finished, angry voices were heard from without, almost overpowering that of the pastor, as he gave the blessing. One of Macdonald's people, who had stepped out to collect the ponies for some of the women and children, had seen the lady, and, after one start back as from the ghost of a drowned woman, had laid hold of her gown, and said she must stay where she could be spoken with by Macdonald on his return from

Skye. She struggled to escape, and did break away—not down the hill, but into the chapel.

The consternation there was inexpressible. The people, supposing her drowned, took her for a ghost, though there was no ghostly calm about her; but her eyes were swollen, her hair disordered, her lips quivering with violent emotion. There was a solemnity about her, too; for extreme anguish is always solemn, in proportion as it approaches to despair. She rushed to the front of the pulpit, and held out her hands, exclaiming aloud to Mr. Ruthven that she was the most persecuted and tormented of human beings; that she appealed to him against her persecutors; and if he did not see her righted, she warned him that he would be damned deeper than hell. Mrs. Ruthven shuddered, and left her seat to place herself by her husband. And now she encountered the poor lady's gaze, and, moreover, had her own grasped as it had never been before.

“Are these children yours?” she was asked.

“Yes,” faltered Mrs. Ruthven.

“Then you must help me to recover mine. Had you ever”—and here she turned to the pastor—“had you ever an enemy?” Her voice turned hoarse as she uttered the word.

“No—yes—O yes!” said he! “I have had enemies, as every man has.”

“Then, as you wish them abased and tormented, you must help me to abase and torment mine—my husband, and Lord Lovat. . . .”

“Lord Lovat!” repeated many wondering voices.

“And Sir Alexander Macdonald; and his tenant of this place; and. . . .”

As Mr. Ruthven looked round him, perplexed

and amazed, one of Macdonald's people went up to him, and whispered into his ear that this lady had come from some place above or below, for she was drowned last week. Mr. Ruthven half-smiled.

"I will know," cried the lady, "what that fellow said. I will hear what my enemies tell you against me. My only hope is in you. I am stolen from Edinburgh; they pretended to bury me there . . . Eh? what?" she cried, as another man whispered something into the pastor's other ear. "Mad! There! I heard it. I heard him say I was mad. Did he not tell you I was mad?"

"He did; and one cannot. . . really I cannot. . ."

As he looked round again in his perplexity, the widow rose from her seat, and said—

"I know this lady; my son and I know her better than any one else in the island does; and we should say she is not mad."

"*Not mad!*" Mr. Ruthven said, with a mingling of surprise in his tone which did not escape the jealous ear of Lady Carse.

"Not mad, Sir; but grievously oppressed. If you could quietly hear the story, Sir, at a fitting time. . . ."

"Ay, ay; that will be best," declared Mr. Ruthven.

"Let me go home with you," said Lady Carse. "I will go home with you; and. . . ."

Mrs. Ruthven exchanged a glance with her husband, and then said, in an embarrassed way, while giving a hand to each of the two children who were clinging to her, that their house was very small, extremely small indeed, with too little room for the children, and none whatever left over.

"It is my house," exclaimed Lady Carse, impa-

tiently. "It was built with a view to you; but it was done under my orders, and I have a claim upon it. And what ails the children?" she cried, in a tone which made the younger cry aloud. "What are they afraid of?"

"I don't know, I am sure," said their mother, helping them, however, to hide their faces in her gown. "But...."

Again Annie rose, and said "there could be no difficulty about a place for the lady, if she would be pleased to do as she did before—live in her cottage. The two dwellings might almost be called one; and if the lady would go home with her
...."

Gratitude was showered on Annie from all the parties. As the lady moved slowly towards the widow's house, holding Annie's arm, and weeping as she went, and followed by the Ruthvens, the eyes of all the Macdonalds gazed after her, in a sort of doubt whether she were a witch, or a ghost, or really and truly a woman.

As soon as Macdonald's sloop could be discerned on its approach, the next day, Mr. Ruthven went down, and paced the shore while daylight lasted, though assured that the vessel would not come up till night. As soon as a signal could be made in the morning for the yawl, he passed to the sloop, where he had a conference with Macdonald; the consequence of which was, that as soon as he was set ashore, the sloop again stood out to sea.

Mrs. Ruthven and Lady Carse saw this, as they stood hand in hand at the door of the new dwelling. They kissed each other at the sight. They had already kissed each other very often; for they called themselves dear and intimate friends who had now

one great common object in life—to avenge Lady Carse's wrongs.

“Well, what news?” they both cried, as Mr. Ruthven came towards them, panting from the haste with which he had ascended.

“The tenant is gone back,” said he; “he has returned to Sir Alexander, to contradict his last news—of your being drowned. By the way, I promised to contradict it, too—to the man who is watching for the body every tide.”

“O! he must have heard the facts from some of the people at the chapel.”

“If he had, he would not believe them, Macdonald says, on any other authority than his. Nor will he leave his post till he finds the body, or”

“Or sees me,” cried Lady Carse, laughing. “Come, let us go and call to him, and tell him he may leave off poking among the weeds. Come; I will show you the way.”

And she ran on with the spirits and pace of a girl. Mr. and Mrs. Ruthven looked at each other with smiles; and Mrs. Ruthven exclaimed, what a charming creature this was, and how shocking it was to think of her cruel fate. Mr. Ruthven shook his head, and declared that he regarded the conduct of her persecutors with grave moral disapprobation. Meantime Lady Carse looked back, beckoned to them with her hand, and stamped with her foot, because they were stopping to talk.

“What a simple creature she is! So childlike!” exclaimed Mrs. Ruthven.

“We must quicken our pace, my dear,” replied her husband. “It would not be right to detain the lady when she wishes to proceed.”

But now Lady Carse was beckoning to somebody else—to little Kate Ruthven, who, with her brother Adam, was peeping from the door of their new home.

“Come, Katie,” said her mother. “Don’t you see that Lady Carse calls you? Bring Adam, and go with us.”

Kate turned very red, but did not come. Lady Carse came laughing back to fetch them; but they bolted into the house, and, when still pursued, scrambled under a bed. When caught, they screamed.

“Well, to be sure,” cried their mother. “What behaviour when a lady asks you to go with her! I declare I am quite ashamed.”

Papa now came up, and said—

“My dears, I do not approve such behaviour as this.”

Kate began to sob; and Adam followed her example.

“There now—do not cry,” said papa. “I cannot permit you to cry. You may go with Lady Carse. Lady Carse is so kind as to wish you to go with her. You will like to go with the lady. Why do you not reply, my dears. You must reply when spoken to. You will like to go with the lady. Eh?”

“No,” murmured Kate.

“No,” whispered Adam.

“I am astonished,” papa declared. “I never saw them conduct themselves in this manner before. Did you, my dear?”

“No: but it is an accident, I dare say. Something has put them out.”

“I must ascertain the cause, however,” papa de-

clared. "Such an incident must not pass uncorrected. Listen to me, my dears; and answer me when I ask you a question. Look at this lady."

Kate slowly lifted her eyes, and Adam then did the same. They seemed on the verge of another scream; and this was not extraordinary; for Lady Carse was not laughing now, but very far from it. There was something in her face that made the children catch at mama's gown.

"Listen to me, my dears," papa went on; "and reply when I ask you a question. This good lady is going to live with us...."

A deeper plunge into the folds of mama's gown.

"And from this time forwards you must love this lady. You love this lady now, my dears, don't you?"

After as long a pause as they dared make, the children said "No."

"Well! I never heard....." exclaimed mama. "What can possess them?" inquired papa. "My dears, why do you not love the lady? Eh! Kate?"

"I don't know," said Kate.

"You don't know!—That is foolish, Adam. Why do you not love this lady who is to live with us? Do not tell me that you don't know, for that is foolish. Why do you not love the lady?"

"Because I can't."

"Why, that is worse still. How perverse...." he said, looking at the ladies—"how perverse is the human heart! My dear, you can, and you must do what is right. You may love me and your mama first; and next you must love this lady. Say you will try."

"I'll try," said Kate.

Adam whimpered a little longer; but then he also said "I'll try."

"That is right. That is the least you can say after your extraordinary behaviour. Now you may go with the lady, as she is so kind as to wish it."

Lady Carse moved off in silence; and the children, tightly grasping each other's hands, followed as if going to a funeral.

"Jump, my dears," said papa, when they had reached the down. "Jump about: you may be merry now."

Both looked as if they were immediately going to cry.

"What now, Adam?" stooping down that the child might speak confidentially to him, but saying to Lady Carse as he did so, that it was necessary sometimes to condescend to the weakness of children. "Adam, tell me why you are not merry, when I assure you you may."

"I can't," whispered Adam.

"You can't! What a sudden fit of humility this boy has got, that he can't do anything to-day. Unless, however, it be true, well-grounded humility, I fear. . . ."

Mama now tried what she could do. She saw, by Lady Carse's way of walking on by herself, that she was displeased; and, under the inspiration of this grief, Mrs. Ruthven so strove to make her children agreeable, by causing them to forget everything disagreeable, that they were soon like themselves again. Mama permitted them to look for hens' eggs among the whins, because they had heard that when she was a little girl she used to look for them among bushes in a field. There was

no occasion to tell them at such a critical moment for their spirits that it was mid-winter, or that whins would be found rather prickly by poultry, or that there were no hens in the island but Mrs. Macdonald's well-sheltered pets. They were told that the first egg they found was to be presented to Lady Carse; and they themselves might divide the next.

Their mother's hope, that if they did not find hens' eggs, they might light upon something else, was not disappointed. Perhaps she took care that it should not. Adam found a barley-cake on the sheltered side of a bush; and it was not long before Kate found one just as good. They were desired to do with these what they would have done with the eggs—present one to Lady Carse, and divide the other. As they were very hungry, they hastened to fulfil the condition of beginning to eat. Again grasping one another's hands, they walked with desperate courage up to Lady Carse, and held out a cake, without yet daring, however, to look up.

“Well, what is that?” she asked sharply.

“A barley-cake.”

“Who bade you bring it to me?”

“Mama.”

“You would not have brought it if Mama had not bid you?”

“No.”

“Allow me to suggest,” observed papa, “that they would not have ventured. It would be a liberty unbecoming their years to. . . .”

“O nonsense!” cried Lady Carse; “I hate these put up manners. No miss—no, young master—I will not take your cake. I take gifts only from

those I love ; and if you don't love me, I don't love you—and so there is a Rowland for your Oliver.”

The children did not know anything about Rowlands and Olivers ; but they saw that the lady was very angry—so angry that they took to their heels, scampered away over the down, and never stopped till they reached home, and had hidden themselves under the bed.

They were not followed. Punishment for their act of absconding was deferred till Lady Carse's errand should be finished. When once down among the rocks, Lady Carse was eager to show her dear friends all the secrets of her late hiding. As soon as Macdonald's watchman was convinced by the lady that she was not drowned, and by the minister that he might go home—as soon as he was fairly out of sight, the wonders of the caves were revealed to the pastor and his wife. The party were so interested in the anecdotes belonging to Lady Carse's season of retreat, that they did not observe, sheltered as they were in eastern caves, that a storm was coming up from the west—one of the tempests which frequently rise from that quarter in the winter season, and break over the Western Islands.

The children were aware of it before their parents. When they found they were not followed, they soon grew tired of whispering under the bed, and came cautiously forth.

It was very dark—strangely dark—till a glare of lightning came which was worse than the darkness. But the thunder was worse : it growled fearfully, so as to make them hold their breath. The next clap made them cry. After that cry came help.

The widow heard the wail from next door, and called to the children from her door; and glad enough were they to take refuge with a grown up person who smiled and spoke cheerfully, in spite of the thunder.

“Are not you afraid of the thunder?” asked Kate, nestling so close to the widow that she was advised to take care lest the sharp bone knitting-needles went into her eyes. “But are not you afraid of the thunder?”

“O no!”

“Why?”

“Because I am not afraid of anything.”

“What, not of anything at all?”

“Not of anything at all: and there are many things much more harmful than thunder.”

“What things?”

“The wind is perhaps the most terrible of all.”

“How loud it is now!” said Adam, shivering as the rushing storm drowned his voice. When the gust had passed, the widow said,

“It was not the wind that made all that noise. It was a dash of hail. Ah! if I do fear anything, it is large hail—not because it will hurt me, but because it may break my window, and let in the wind to blow out my lamp.”

“But why do not things hurt you? If the lightning was to kill you. . . .”

“That would not hurt me,” said the widow, smiling. “I do not call that being hurt, more than dying in any other way that God pleases.”

“But if it did not kill you quite, but hurt you—hurt you very much indeed—burned you, or made you blind?”

“Then I should know that it was no hurt, but

in some way a blessing, because the lightning comes from God. I always like to see it, because There!" she said, as a vivid flash illumined the place. "Did you ever see anything so bright as that? How should we ever fancy the brightness of God's throne, if he did not send us a single ray, now and then, in this manner—one single ray, which is as much as we can bear? I dare say you have heard it read in church how all things are God's messengers, without any word being said about their hurting us,—'fire and hail:' here they are!"

When that gust was past, she went on,

"'Snow and vapour, stormy winds fulfilling his word.' Here we are in the midst of the fire and the hail and the stormy winds. If we looked out, perhaps we might see the 'snow and vapour.'"

The children did not seem to wish it.

"Then again," the widow went on, "we are told that 'He causeth his wind to blow, and the waters flow.' I am sure I can show you that. I am sure the sea must have risen much already, before such a wind as this. Come!" she continued, wrapping her plaid round herself and the children; keep close to me and you will not be cold. The cold has not come yet: and if we stand under the sheltered side of the house we shall not be blown. Hark! there is the roar of the waves when the thunder stops. Now we shall see how 'He causeth his wind to blow and the waters flow.'"

She looked so cheerful and promised them such a sight, that they did not like to beg to stay within. Though the hail came pelting in gusts, there was no rain at present to wet them. The wind almost strangled them at the first moment; but they were

under the eastern gable of the cottage in an instant, out of the force of the blast.

There they sat down, all huddled together; and there the children saw more than had been promised.

The tempest had not yet reached Skye; and they could see, in the intervals of rolling clouds, mountain-peaks glittering with snow.

“There is the snow!” said the widow. “And see the vapours!—the tumbling, rolling vapours that we call steam-clouds! Look how the lightning flash darts out of them! and how the sea seems swelling and boiling up to meet the vapours! A little way from the land, the wind catches the spray and carries it up and away. If the wind was now from the east, as it will be in spring, that spray would wash over us, and drench us to the skin in a minute.”

“What, up here?”

“O yes, and higher still. There! Adam felt some then.”

And well he might. The sea was now wrought into such tumult that its waves rolled in upon the rocks with tremendous force, causing the caverns to resound with the thundering shock, and the very summit of the precipices to vibrate. Every projection sent up columns of spray, the sprinklings of which reached the heights, bedewing the window of the cottage, and sending in the party under the gable.

“There now,” said the widow, when she had fed her fire and sat down, “we have seen a fine sight to-day; and there will be more to-morrow.”

“Shall we see it to-morrow?”

“O yes. If you like to come to me to-mor-

row, I think I can promise to show you the shore all black with weed thrown up by the storm. And perhaps we may get some wood. These storms often cast up wood—sometimes even thick logs. We must not touch the logs; they belong to Sir Alexander Macdonald, but we may take the smaller pieces, those of us who can get down before other people have taken them away. If the minister is not aware of this, we must tell him: and the weeds will be good to manure his kail-bed, if he can find nothing better.”

“ Will you go to-morrow and pick up some wood?”

“ If I can get down alone. But I cannot climb up and down as I used to do. I will show you something prettier than wood or weed that I picked up, after one of these storms, when I was younger.” And she took out of her chest three shells, one very large and handsome, which had been cast upon the western shore some years before. Adam thought this so beautiful that he begged to have it; but the widow could not give it away. She told him she must keep it, for a particular reason; but he could see it whenever he liked to come to her for the purpose.

But Adam thought he might pick up such an one himself, if he could go to-morrow to the western shore; and his friend could not say that this was impossible. O! then, would she not go and show him the way? Would she not try, if he and Kate helped her with all their strength? They were very strong. If she would stand up they would show her how strong they were. She stood up, and they tried to carry her. Their faces were exceedingly red, and they were very near lifting up

their friend, and she was laughing, and wondering whether they could carry her down the rocks in that way, when the door burst open and Lady Carse appeared.

“The children must come home,” said she to Annie. “They have no business here.”

“I called them in, my Lady, when the thunder frightened them.”

“They should not have come. They should have told you that they were under their parents’ displeasure.”

All now looked grave enough. The children stole away home, skilfully avoiding taking hold of the lady’s offered hands. She pulled the door after her in no gentle manner. She did not much care whether the children were fond of her; but it was somehow disagreeable to her that they should be happy with her next-door neighbour.

CHAPTER XII.

THE STEWARD ON HIS ROUNDS.

THE return of Macdonald's boat was a great event ; and especially to the inhabitants of the hill-side cottages. Macdonald was accompanied by Sir Alexander's steward, who brought some furniture and finishings for the chapel and the minister's dwelling, and, for the first time, a parcel for Lady Carse.

When the package was brought up from the shore, Lady Carse rushed in to tell Annie the news, and to bid her come and see the unpacking.

The poor lady was sure that by means of Mr. Johny, or through some other channel, tidings of her existence and banishment had reached her friends at Edinburgh, and that this parcel contained some warrant of release. With raised colour and sparkling eyes, she talked of her departure the next morning ; of how it would be best to travel, when she once set foot on the main ; of how soon she could reach Edinburgh, and whether it would not be better to go first to London, to lay her own case and the treason of her enemies before the Prime Minister. Mrs. Ruthven agreed to all she said. Mr. Ruthven walked to and fro before the door, stopping at every turn to offer his congratulations. Annie looked anxious and eager.

When the package was deposited before the door, and the glee of the party was at the highest,

the children capered and shouted. Annie quietly checked this, and kept them by her side: whereupon Lady Carse smiled at Mrs. Ruthven, and said she pitied people who were grave when good fortune befell their friends, and who could not bear even to let children sympathize in it.

“You mistake me, Madam,” said Annie. “If this package was from Edinburgh, I should feel more like dancing myself than stopping the children’s dancing: but I sadly fear this comes from no further off than Skye. I know the Skye packages.”

“Nonsense!” cried Lady Carse. “I know nobody in Skye. I hate croakers. Some people take a pleasure in spoiling other people’s pleasure.”

“That is a temper that I do not approve of,” observed Mr. Ruthven. “This life is to some such a vale of tears that I think it is ungrateful not to pluck the few flowers of innocent pleasure which grow by the wayside. I should think that a Christian temper would be ready to assist the enjoyment. Here, my good men....”

“What stupid fellows those men are!” cried Lady Carse. “They are actually going away without helping us to uncord the package.”

She called after them; but in answer to her scolding, the men only stared; which made Lady Carse tell them they were idiots. A word or two from Annie in Gaelic brought them back directly, and obtained from them what aid was needed.

“Shall I inquire, Madam,” asked Annie, “anything that you may wish to know?”

“No,” replied Lady Carse, sharply. “You speak Gaelic, I think,” she said to Mr. Ruthven.

“ Will you learn from the men all you can about this package, and tell me every word they say ? ”

Mr. Ruthven bowed, cleared his throat, and began to examine the men. Lady Carse meantime said to Mrs. Ruthven, in Annie's hearing, that she must wait, and restrain her impatience a little while. There was no saying what might be in the package, and they must be by themselves when they opened it.

Mrs. Ruthven said she would send the children away ; and Annie offered to take them home with her.

“ The children ! ” exclaimed Lady Carse. “ O ! bless them ! what harm can they do ? Let *them* stay, by all means. I hope there will be nobody to spoil *their* pleasure.”

Annie curtsayed, and withdrew to her own house. As she shut the door, and then sank into her chair, she thought how bad her rheumatic pains were. Her heart was swelling a little too ; but it soon subsided as she said to herself,

“ A vale of tears indeed is this life—or rather a waste and howling wilderness—to that poor lady with her restless mind. God knows I would not reckon hardly with her, or any one so far from peace of mind. Nor can I wonder, when I pity her so much, that others should also, and forget other things when she is before their eyes. I did think, when I heard the minister was coming. . . . But I had no right to expect anything beyond the blessing of the sabbath, and of burial, and the ordinances. And O ! there is the comfort of the sabbath ! The Word is preached, and there is prayer and praise now on sabbath-days, for a year to come,—or perhaps as many years as I shall live.

If this was a place for peace of mind before, what can trouble us now?"

The closing psalm of last sabbath had never been out of her ears and her heart since. She now began to sing it, softly at first, but louder as her soul warmed to it. She was soon stopped by a louder sound,—a shrill cry from the next house; and presently Mrs. Ruthven rushed in to know what she was to do. Lady Carse was hysterical. The package had contained no news from her friends, but had brought cruel disappointment. It contained some clothing, a stone of sugar, a pound of tea, six pecks of wheat, and an anker of spirits; and there was a slip of paper to say that the same quantity of these stores would be brought yearly by the steward when he came to collect the heather rent. At this sentence of an abode of years in this place, Lady Carse had given way to despair,—had vowed she would choke the steward in his sacks of feathers, that she might be tried for murder on the main; and then she had attempted to scatter the wheat, and to empty out the spirits; but that Mr. Ruthven had held her hand, and told her that the anker of spirits was in fact her purse,—her means of purchasing from Macdonald and others her daily meat and such service as she needed. But now she was in hysterics, and they did not know what to do next. Would Mrs. Fleming come?

Annie thought the lady would rather not see her; told Mrs. Ruthven how to treat the patient, and begged that the children might be sent to her, if they were in the way.

The children were with Annie all the rest of the day; for their father and mother were exceedingly busy writing letters, to go by the steward.

In the evening the steward paid them a visit, in his round back to the boat. He was very civil, brought with him a girl, the handiest and comeliest, he said, that he could engage among Macdonald's people, to wait upon Lady Carse; gave order for the immediate erection of a sort of outhouse for her stores, and desired her to say if there was anything else that she was pressingly in want of. She would not say a word to him of one kind or another, but turned him over to the minister. But the minister could not carry his own points. He could not induce the steward to convey a single letter of the several written that day. The steward was sorry: had hoped it was understood that no letter was to leave the island,—no written paper of any kind,—while Lady Carse resided there. He would not take these to Sir Alexander: he would not ask him to yield this point even to the minister. Sir Alexander's orders were positive; and it was clear that in these parts that settled the question.

While the argument was going on, Lady Carse rose from her seat, and passed behind the steward, to leave the room. She caught up the letters unperceived, and unperceived slipped them into the steward's pocket: so that while he bowed himself out, declining to touch the letters, he was actually carrying them with him.

Helsa, Lady Carse's new maid, witnessed this prank; and, not daring to laugh at the moment, made up for this by telling the story to her acquaintance, the widow, when sent for the children at night.

“That will never do,” Annie declared. “Harm may come of it, but no good.”

And this set her thinking.

The consequence of her meditation was that she roused the family from their beds when even Lady Carse had been an hour asleep. When Mr. Ruthven found that there was neither fire nor illness in the case, he declared to Annie his disapprobation of untimely hours; and said that if those who had a lamp to keep burning became in time forgetful of the difference between night and day, they should remember that it was not so with others; and that the afflicted especially, who had griefs and agitations during the day, should be permitted to enjoy undisturbed such rest as might be mercifully sent them.

Annie listened respectfully to all this, and acknowledged the truth of it. It was however a hope that Lady Carse might possibly sleep hereafter under the same roof with her children, if this night were not lost, which made her take the liberty of rousing the minister at such an hour.

She was confident that the steward would either bring back the letters, as soon as he put his hand upon them, or destroy them; for such a thing was never heard of as an order of Sir Alexander's being disobeyed. She had thought of a way of sending a note, if the minister could write on a small piece of paper what would alarm the lady's friends. She had now and then, at long intervals, a supply from a relation near Dumfries, of a particular kind of thread which she used to knit into little socks and mittens for sale. This knitting was now too fine for her eyes: but the steward did not know this; and he would no doubt take her order, as he had done before. She believed he would come up to return the letters quite early in

the morning. If she had a ball of thread ready, he would take it as a pattern: and this ball might contain a little note;—a very small one indeed, if the minister would write it.

“How would the receiver know there was a note?” asked Mr. Ruthven.

It might be years before the ball was used up, Mrs. Ruthven observed: or it might come back as it went.

“I thought,” said Annie, “that I would give the order in this way. I would say that I want four pieces of the thread, all exactly the same length as the one that goes. The steward will set that down in his book; and he always does what we ask him very carefully. Then my relation will unwind the ball to see what the length is, and come upon the note; and then....”

“I see. I see it all,” declared Mr. Ruthven. “Do not you, my dear?”

“O yes; I see. It will be delightful, will it not, Lady Carse?”

“That is as it may be,” said Lady Carse. “It is a plan which may work two ways.”

“I do not see how it can work to any mischief,” Annie quietly declared. “I will leave you to consider it. If you think well of the plan, I shall be found ready with my thread. If the steward returns, it will be very early, that he may not lose the tide.”

As might be expected, Annie’s offer was accepted; for even Lady Carse’s prejudiced mind could point out no risk, while the success might be everything. There was something that touched her feelings in the patient care with which the widow sat, in the lamplight, winding the thread

over and over the small slip of paper, so as to leave no speck visible, and to make a tight and secure ball.

The slip of paper contained a request that the reader would let Mr. Hope, advocate, Edinburgh, know that Lady Carse was not dead, though pretended to be buried, but stolen away from Edinburgh, and now confined to the after-mentioned island of the Hebrides. Then followed Lady Carse's signature and that of the minister, with the date.

"It will do! It will do!" exclaimed Mrs. Ruthven. "O! my dear, dear Lady Carse...."

But Lady Carse turned away, and paced the room.

"I don't wonder, I am sure," declared Mrs. Ruthven, "I don't wonder that you walk up and down. To think what may hang on this night.... Now, take my arm,—let me support you."

And she put her arm round the waist of her dear friend. But Lady Carse shook her off, turned weeping to Annie, and sobbed out,

"If you save me... If this is all sincere in you, and"

"Sincere!" exclaimed Annie, in such surprise that she almost dropped the ball.

"O yes, yes; it is all right, and you are an angel to me. I...."

"What an amiable creature she is!" said Mrs. Ruthven to her husband, gazing on Lady Carse. "What noble impulses she has!"

"Very fine impulses," declared the minister. "It is very affecting. I find myself much moved." And he began pacing up and down.

"Sincere!" Annie repeated to herself in the same surprise.

“O dear!” observed Mrs. Ruthven, in a whisper, which however the widow heard: “how long it takes for some people to know some other people. There is Mrs. Fleming now all perplexed about the dear creature! Why, she knew her,—I mean she had her with her,—before we ever saw her; and now we know her. . . . O! how well, how thoroughly we know her! We know her to the bottom of her heart.”

“A most transparent being indeed;” declared Mr. Ruthven: “as guileless as a child.”

“Call me a child,—you may,” sobbed Lady Carse. “None but children and such as I quarrel with their best friends. She has been to me. . . .”

“You reproach yourself too severely, my dear lady,” declared the minister. “There are seasons of inequality in us all. . . . Not that I intend to justify. . . .”

His wife did not wait for the end, but said,

“Quarrel, my dear soul? Quarrel with your best friends! *You* do such a thing! Let us see whether you ever quarrel with us! And we *are* friends, are we not? You and we. Let us see whether you ever quarrel with us! Ah!”

Annie had finished her work; and she was gone before the long kiss of the new friends was over.

“It is only two days more to the sabbath,” thought she. Then she smiled and said, “Any one might call me a child, counting the days as if I could not wait for my treat. But really I did not know what the comfort of the sabbath would be. The chapel is all weather-tight now, and thank God for sending us a minister!”

As all expected, up came the steward; very early, and very angry. Nobody from the minis-

ter's house cared to encounter him. He threw the letters down upon the threshold of the door, and shouted out that his bringing them back was more than the writer deserved. If he had read them, and made mischief of their contents, nobody could, under the circumstances, have blamed him. Here they were, however, as a lesson to the family not to lose their time, and waste their precious ink and paper in writing letters that would never leave the island.

As he was turning to go away, the widow opened her door, and asked if he would excuse her for troubling him with one little commission which she had not thought of the day before. And she produced the ball of thread.

Lady Carse was watching through a chink in a shutter. She saw the steward's countenance relax, and heard his voice soften as he spoke to the widow. She perceived that Annie had influence with him, if she would use it faithfully and zealously. Next she observed the care with which he wrote in his note-book Annie's directions about her commission, and how he deposited the precious ball in his securest pocket. She felt that this chance of escape, though somewhat precarious, was the best that had yet occurred.

Before the steward was out of sight she opened the shutter, though it creaked perilously, and kissed her hand to the surprised Annie, who was watching her agent down the hill. Annie smiled, but secured caution by immediately going in.

CHAPTER XIII.

TRUE SOLITUDE.

THE season advanced, bringing the due tokens of the approach of summer. The gales came from the east instead of the west, and then subsided into mild airs. The mists which had brooded over sea and land melted away, and, as the days lengthened, permitted the purple heights of the rocky St. Kilda to be seen clear and sharp, as the sun went down behind them. The weed which had blackened the shore of the island at the end of winter was now gone from the silver sands. Some of it was buried in the minister's garden as manure. The minister began to have hopes of his garden. He had done his best to keep off the salt spray by building the wall ten feet high; and it was thought that just under the wall a few cabbages might grow; and in one corner there was an experiment going forward to raise onions. Kate and Adam told the widow, from day to day, the hopes and fears of the household about this garden; and it was then that she knew that her son Rollo was now gardener, as he had been head-builder of the wall.

From Rollo himself she heard less and less of his proceedings and interests. Anxious as she was, she abstained from questioning or reproving him on the few occasions when he spent an hour with her. She was aware of his high opinion of himself, and of the point he made of managing his own affairs;

and she knew that there were those next door who would certainly engross him if anything passed in his mother's house to make him reluctant to stay there. She therefore mustered all her cheerfulness when he appeared on the threshold, gave him her confidence, made him as comfortable as she could, and never asked him whence he had come, or how long he would stay. She had a strong persuasion that Rollo would discover in time who was his best friend, and was supremely anxious that when that time came there should be nothing to get over in his return to her—no remembrance of painful scenes—no sting of reproach—no shame but such as he must endure from his own heart. Strong as was her confidence in the final issue, the time did seem long to her yearning spirit, lonely as she was. Many a night she listened to the melancholy song of the throstle from the hill side, and watched the mild twilight without thinking of sleep, till all was silent; and was still awake when the lark began its merry greeting to the dawn which was streaking the east. Many a day she sat in the sun watching the pathways by which she hoped her son might come to her; and then perhaps she would hear his laugh from behind the high garden wall, and discover that he had been close at hand all day without having a word to say to her. How many true and impressive things passed through her mind that she thought she would say to him! But they all remained unsaid. When the opportunity came she saw it to be her duty to serve him by waiting and loving, feeling and trusting that rebuke from God was the only shock which would effectually reach this case, and reserving herself as the consoler of the sinner, when that hour should arrive.

As for the other parties, they were far too busy—far too much devoted to each other to have any time to spare for her, or any thought, except when the children were wished out of the way, or when the much more ardent desire was indulged that her house could be had for the residence of Lady Carse and her maid. In spite of all the assurances given to Lady Carse that her presence and friendship were an unmixed blessing, the fact remained that the household were sadly crowded in the new dwelling. There was talk, at times, of getting more rooms built: but then there entered in a vague hope that the widow's house might be obtained, which would be above everything pleasant and convenient. At those times she was thought of, but more and more as an obstruction—almost an intruder. Now and then, when she startled them by some little act of kindness, they remarked that she was a good creature, they believed, though they considered that there was usually something dangerous about people so very reserved and unsociable.

One day this reserved and unsociable person volunteered a visit to her astonished neighbours. She walked in, in the afternoon, looking rather paler than usual, and somewhat exhausted. Mr. Ruthven was outside the door, smoking his pipe after dinner. He came in with the widow, and placed a stool for her. His wife was not in the room. Lady Carse was lying on the settle, flushed and apparently drowsy. She opened her eyes as Annie and the minister entered, and then half-closed them again, without stirring.

“Yes, I have been walking,” said the widow, in answer to Mr. Ruthven's observation. “But it is not that that has tired me. I have been only as far

as Macdonald's. But, sir, I must go further to-night, unless I can interest you to do what must be done without loss of time."

The minister raised his eyebrows, and looked inquiringly.

"I have learned, sir, that from this house invitations have been sent to smugglers to begin a trade with this island; and that it is about to begin; and that this has been done by corrupting my son. I see well enough the object of this. I see that Lady Carse hopes to escape to the main by a smuggling vessel coming to this coast. I can enter into this. I do not wonder at any effort the poor lady makes...."

"You insufferable woman!" cried Lady Carse, starting up from her half-sleep with a glowing face and a clenched hand. "Do you dare to pity me?"

"I do, madam: and I ask of you in return—I implore you to pity me. This is the bitterest day to me since that which made my boy fatherless. I have this day discovered that my fatherless boy has been corrupted by those who...."

"I do not approve of inuendo," declared Mr. Ruthven. "I recommend you to name names."

"Certainly, Sir. My son has been made a smuggler by the persuasion and management of Lady Carse; and, as I have reason to believe, Sir, with your knowledge."

"Here is treachery!" cried Lady Carse. "We must make our part good. I will....I know how...."

She was hastening out, when the minister stopped her at the door. She made some resistance, and Annie heard her say something about a pistol on

the top of the bed, and the wonder if her father's daughter did not know how to use it.

Even in the midst of her own grief, Annie could not but remark to herself how the lady's passions seemed to grow more violent, instead of calming down.

"You had better go, Mrs. Fleming," said Mr. Ruthven. "Make no disturbance here, but go; and I will come in and speak to you."

"How soon?" Annie anxiously inquired.

"As soon as possible—immediately. Go now, for Lady Carse is very angry."

"I will, Sir. But I owe it to you to tell you that the adventure is put an end to. I have been to Macdonald's, and told him, speaking as Rollo's mother, of the danger my son was in: and Macdonald will take care that no smuggling-vessel reaches this coast, to-night or in future."

"Go instantly," exclaimed Mr. Ruthven; and, seeing Lady Carse's countenance, Annie was glad to hasten out of her reach.

The widow sat down on the threshold of her cottage, awaiting the minister. Her heart throbbed. A blessing might be in store at the end of this weary day. Good might come out of evil. She might now have an opportunity of appealing to her minister—of opening her heart to him about the cares which she needed to share with him, and which should have been his cares as pastor. She trusted she should be enabled to speak freely and calmly. She prayed that she might: but her body was exhausted, so that she could not overcome to her satisfaction the agitation of her mind. It did not mend the matter that she was kept waiting very long: and when Mr. Ruthven came out at his own

door, it was with some difficulty that Annie rose to make respectful way for him.

“Be seated,” said Mr. Ruthven, in a tone of severity. “I have much to say to you.”

Both seated themselves. Mr. Ruthven cleared his throat, and said—

“It is the most painful part of a pastor’s duty to administer reproof; and more especially to members of his flock whose years should have brought them wisdom and self-control.”

Annie clasped her hands on her knees, and looked meekly in his face.

“I should have hoped,” Mr. Ruthven went on, “that a Christian woman of your standing, and one who is blest, as you yourself have been known to acknowledge, with a life of peace, would have had compassion on a most suffering sister, and have rather striven to alleviate her sorrows, and to soften her occasional self-reproach for what she amiably calls her infirmities of sensibility, than have wounded and upbraided her, and treacherously cut off her frail chance of release from a most unjust captivity.”

“I!—I wound and upbraided Lady Carse!”

“Now, do not compel me to remind you of what you ought to know full well—the deceitfulness of the human heart. Listen to me.”

Again Annie looked gently in his face.

“I left that poor lady, already overwhelmed with misfortune, prostrated anew by your attack of this afternoon. I left her dissolved in tears—shaken by agitation; and I resolved that my first act of duty should be to remonstrate privately—observe, I say privately—against the heartlessness which could pour in drops of bitterness, to make the already

brimming cup overflow. Now, what have you to say?"

"I should wish to know, Sir, what part of my conduct it is that is wrong. If I knew this, I am sure...."

"If you knew! My good woman, this blindness and self-satisfaction appear to show that this life of peace, which you yourself acknowledge yours has been, has gone somewhat too far—has not been altogether blessed to you. If you are really so satisfied with yourself as to be unable to see any sin within you...."

"O Sir! Do not think me impatient if I make haste to say that I never harboured such a thought. It makes me sink with shame to think of my ever having possibly such a thought. What I asked for, Sir, was to know my sin towards Lady Carse, that I might make reparation if I could, and.... Will it please you, Sir, to tell me...."

"Tell me, rather, what sin you are conscious of; and we shall then get at the bottom of this last offence. Come, let me hear!"

Annie looked down, hesitated, blushed deeply, and said she supposed it was owing to her not being accustomed to the blessing of having a pastor that she found it so difficult to open her heart now that the blessing was given for which she had so often prayed. She would strive to overcome the difficulty. After a pause she said her chief trouble about her state of mind was that some of her trust and peace seemed to have left her.

"Ah! the moment it is put to the test!" said Mr. Ruthven.

"Just so, sir: that is what I said to myself. As long as I lived alone, out of the sound of any

voice but Rollo's, I thought my peace was settled, and that I was only waiting for the better peace which is to come hereafter. Then, when Rollo was away, and my mind was searching doubtfully after him, where he might be, and whether safe or killed, I could always find rest, and say to myself that he was in God's hand, to die now or to live to close my eyes. But now, Sir, there is a sadness come over me; though I am obliged to your dear children for many cheerful hours—I would not forget that. But as for my own child, when I hear his voice merry from behind your garden-wall, when I have been longing for days to see his face—or when your children tell me things that he has said, just while my ear is pining for his voice, I find myself less settled in mind than I was—much less settled, Sir, than I think a Christian woman ought to be.”

“And this indicates more than you tell me,” observed Mr. Ruthven. “What can you have done to drive your son from his home and from his mother's side? Some mistake there must be, to say the very least—some fatal mistake, I will call it, for I would not be severe—some awful mistake. Eh?”

“Perhaps so, Sir.” And she smothered a sigh.

The minister then gave her, at some length, his views on education, insisting much on the duty of making young people happy at home; ending with saying that no young man could, he thought, expect much comfort in the society of a mother who could be so reckless of anybody's peace as she had shown herself that afternoon. He hoped she would take what he said in good part. It was not pleasant to him to deal rebuke; but he must not shrink from it: and he rose to go.

“Certainly, Sir,” said Annie, rising too, and holding by the bed to steady herself. “But, Sir, if you would please to tell me particularly what you think I have done so wrong to-day.... Sir, you would not have me let my son be made a smuggler?”

“You should.... Nothing can be clearer than that you should.... I wonder you need to be told that you should have spoken to me. Instead of which, you went quietly and told Macdonald.”

“I am sure, Sir, I thought you knew all about it.”

“What of that? I am here at hand, to be your adviser—not to be treated with disrespect. I leave you now to think over what I have said. I trust the result will be that you will make what reparation you can to Lady Carse: though it is foolish to talk of reparation; for the mischief done is, I fear, irreparable. I leave you to think of this. Good evening!”

Annie thought of all that had passed; and of a few other things. She thought that while it was clear that a pastor might take a wrong view of the state of mind and conduct of one of his flock, it was a privilege to know, at least, what view he took. He was faithful, as far as plain speaking went: and that was much. And then, it is so rarely that any censure is uttered for which there is absolutely no foundation, that it is usually profitable to receive it. While feeling that “it is a small thing to be judged of man’s judgment,” it may be a great thing to know a man’s unfavourable opinion of us. She should soon recover from this conversation; and then, if she had obtained any wisdom from it, it would be, after all, the marking blessing of this

day. She was not aware of another: that Mr. Ruthven had been somewhat touched by what she had said of Rollo—his eyes somewhat opened.

Once more her mind rested on the idea now become so prominent with her. "The Sabbath is coming round again," she thought. "It pleases God to give us a complete blessing then. It is His word that is spoken then—His judgment that we are judged by. Nothing comes between us and Him then. There is always the Sabbath now to think of."

Tired as she was, or as she thought herself till she found herself enjoying the repose of the moonlight shore, there was one more walk necessary before Annie could try to sleep.

The sea was calm, and there was scarcely any wind. If the smuggling-vessel had approached the island in any part, it could hardly have got away again. She had not seen it from her hill-side; but she must be satisfied that it was not on the northern shore. The western was safe enough, from its being overlooked from Macdonald's farm.

Annie had just reached the longest and widest stretch of beach when the large moon rose out of the still waters. There was not even the slightest veil of mist obscuring the horizon; and the fluctuation of the water-line was distinct upon the clear disk of the moon. The gush of quivering light which instantaneously reached from the horizon to her feet illumined Annie's heart no less than the scene around her. The ripple of the little waves which played upon the pebbles was music to her ear. In a tranquil and hopeful spirit she thought of her errand, and looked steadily over the whole expanse of the sea, where, under the broad moon-

light, and a sky which had at this season no darkness in it, there was certainly no vessel in sight.

Pursuing her walk northwards, she perceived a small dark object lying on the silvery sands. When she reached it, she found it was a little cask, which the smell declared to contain rum. By the smell, and the cask being light, it was clear that some of the spirit had been spilled. Annie found a small hole, beside which lay a quill. She feared that this told too plainly of the neighbourhood of smugglers, and her heart sunk. She went on, and immediately saw another dark object lying on the beach—a person, as she thought. It was a woman, in the common country clothing, sound asleep. Annie hastened to wake her, thinking it unsafe to sleep under the moon's rays. To her extreme surprise she found it was Lady Carse.

She could imagine the lady to have come down in hope of meeting a smuggling-vessel. She would not have wondered to meet her wandering among the coves; but that on such an errand, at such a time, she should be asleep, was surprising.

Annie tried gentle means to rouse her, which would enable her to slip away as the lady awoke, sparing her the pain of her presence. She rattled the pebbles with her foot, coughed, and at last sang—but all without causing the lady to stir. Then the widow was alarmed, and stooped to look closer. The sleeper breathed heavily, her head was hot, and her breath told the secret of her unseasonable drowsiness. Annie shrank back in horror. At first she concluded that much of Lady Carse's violent passion was now accounted for. But she presently considered it more probable that this was a single instance of intemperance, caused

by the temptation of finding a leaking cask of spirit on the sands, just in a moment of disappointment, and perhaps of great exhaustion. This thought made Annie clear what to do.

She went back to the cask, made the hole larger with a stone, and poured out all the rum upon the sand. The cask was now so light that she could easily roll it down to the margin of the tide, where she left it, half-full of sea-water. Having thus made all safe behind her, she proceeded to the coves, where she found, not any signs of a vessel, but one of Macdonald's men on the watch. From him she learned that Macdonald had gone out to look for the smuggling-boat; had seen it, and turned it back; and that the smuggling-crew had been obliged to throw overboard some of their cargo, to lighten their vessel for flight. Macdonald thought they would hardly venture hither again for some time to come. This was good news; but there was better: Rollo was not with the smugglers. He was out fowling this afternoon. Perhaps by this time he might be at home.

Annie's errand was finished; and she might now return and rest. Macdonald's man spoke of his hopes of some goods being washed up by the next tide. Annie told him nothing of the cask, nor of what she had done with the rum. She commended him to his watch, and left him.

Lady Carse was still sleeping, but less heavily. She roused herself when spoken to, started up, and looked about her, somewhat bewildered.

"I took the liberty, Madam, of speaking to you, to waken you," said Annie; "because the moon is up, and was shining on your head, which is considered bad for the health."

“Really,” said Lady Carse, “it is very odd. I don’t know how I could think of falling asleep here. I suppose I was very tired.”

“You look so now, Madam. Better finish your sleep at home. And first, if I may advise, you will throw some salt water on your head, and drink some fresh at the spring, when we come to it. The people here say that bathing the head takes away the danger from sleeping under the moon’s rays.”

Lady Carse had no objection to do this, as her head was hot; and now Annie hoped that she would escape detection by the Ruthvens, so that she alone would know the secret. Both drank at the spring, and after that it might be hoped that there would be little more smell of spirits about the one than the other.

When they passed the cask, now beginning to float in the rising tide, Lady Carse started. It was clear that she now remembered what had made her sleep. “There is a cask!” said she, in her hurry.

“Yes: a cask of sea-water,” Annie quietly observed. “I emptied out the bad stuff that was in it, and”

“You did! What right had you?”

“It was contraband,” said Annie. “Macdonald saw the cargo thrown over: nobody would have claimed it, and plenty would have helped themselves to what is unfit for drink. So I poured it out upon the sand.”

“Very free and easy, I must say,” observed Lady Carse.

“Very,” Annie agreed: “but less of a liberty than some would have taken, if I had left it to tempt them. I threw away only what is some man’s unlawful property. Others would have

thrown away that which belongs to God, and is very precious in his eyes—the human reason, which he has made but a little lower than the glory of the angels.”

Lady Carse spoke no more—not even when they reached their own doors. Whether she was moody or conscience-stricken, Annie could not tell. All the more anxious was she to do her part; and she went in to pray that the suffering lady might be saved from this new peril—the most fearful of the snares of her most perilous life. Annie did not forget to pray that those who had driven the sufferer to such an extremity as that she could not resist even this means of forgetting her woes, might be struck with such a sense of their cruelty as to save their victim before it was too late.

CHAPTER XIV.

HELSEA'S NEWS.

ONE day when Annie was trimming her lamp, she observed Helsa, Lady Carse's maid, watching the process earnestly from the door, where she was looking in. "Come in, Helsa," said the widow, in Gaelic, which was more familiar to the girl than English. "Come in, if you have nothing better to do than to see me trim my lamp."

"I am afraid about that lamp, and that is the truth," replied Helsa. "I had charge of a lamp at Macdonald's once, when my mother went to the main for a week; but then, if it went out, nobody was much the worse. If this one goes out, and anybody drowns in the harbour, and the blame is mine, what shall I do?"

"The blame yours!" said the widow, looking at her.

"Yes; when you live at Macdonald's, and I have to keep the lamp. I am not sure that I can keep awake all the night when winter comes: but they say I must."

Helsa was surprised to find that the widow knew nothing of the plan that Lady Carse now talked of more than anything else: that Annie was to go and live at Macdonald's, that Lady Carse and her maid might have the widow's house, where Helsa was to do all the work in the day, and to keep the lamp at night. The girl declared that the family

never sat at meals without talking of the approaching time when they could all have more room and do whatever they pleased. Adam had cried yesterday about the widow going away ; but he had been forbidden to cry about what would make Lady Carse so much happier ; and when Kate had whispered to him that Lady Carse would no longer live in their house, Adam had presently dried his tears, and began to plan how he would meet the widow sometimes on the western sands, to pick up the fine shells she had told him of. Helsa went on to say that she could have cried longer than the boy, for she was afraid to think of being alone with Lady Carse at times when . . .”

Annie interrupted her by saying, with a smile, “ You need not have any dread of living in this house, Helsa. I have no thought of leaving it. There is some mistake.”

Helsa was delighted with this assurance. But she proved her point—that the mistake was not hers—that such a plan *was* daily, almost hourly, spoken of next door as settled. She was going on to tell how her mistress frightened her by her ways : her being sleepy in the afternoons, unless she was very merry or dreadfully passionate, and so low in the mornings that she often did little but cry ; but the widow checked this. While at Mrs. Ruthven’s house Helsa should make no complaints to anybody else ; or, if she had serious complaints to make, it should be to Macdonald. Helsa pleaded that Macdonald would then perhaps take away the anker of spirits, as being at the bottom of the mischief ; and then Lady Carse would kill her. She had once shown her a pistol ; but nobody could find that pistol now. Helsa laughed, and looked as if

she could have told where it was. In a moment, however, she was grave enough, hearing herself called by her mistress.

"I shall say I came to learn about the lamp," said she. "And that is true, you know."

"Why do not you speak English, both of you?" demanded Lady Carse from the door. "You both speak English. I will have no mysteries. I will know what you were saying."

Helsa faltered out that she came to see how widow Fleming managed her lamp.

"Was it about the lamp that you were talking? I will know."

"If we had any objection, Madam, to your knowing what we were saying," interposed Annie, "we are by no means bound to tell. But you are quite welcome to it. I have been assuring Helsa that there is some mistake about my leaving this house. Here I have lived, and here I hope to die."

"We must talk that matter over," declared Lady Carse. "We are so crowded next door that we can bear it no longer; and I *must* live in sight of the harbour, you know."

And she went over all the old arguments, while she sent Helsa to bring in Mr. Ruthven, that he might add his pastoral authority to her claims. After having once declared herself immoveable, Annie bore all in silence; the pleas that her lamp was so seldom wanted; that it would be well tended for her, while she could sleep all night, and every night; that it had become a passion with Lady Carse to obtain this house, and that any one was an enemy who denied her the only thing she could enjoy. These pleas Annie listened to in

silence, and then to reproaches on her selfishness, her obstinacy, her malice and cruelty. When both her visitors had exhausted their arguments, she turned to Lady Carse, and intimated that now they had all spoken their minds on this subject, she wished to be alone in her own house. Then she turned to Mr. Ruthven, and told him that whatever he had to say as her pastor, she should gladly listen to . . .

“In some other place than this,” he declared with severity. “I have tried rebuke and remonstrance here, beside your own hearth, with a perseverance which I fear has lowered the dignity of my office. I have done. I enter this house no more as your pastor.”

Annie bowed her head, and remained standing till they were gone; then she sank down, melting into tears.

“This then,” and her heart swelled at the thought. “This then is the end of my hope—the brightest hope I ever had since my great earthly hope was extinguished! I thought I could bear anything if there was only a pastor at hand. And now . . . But there is my duty still! Nothing can take that away. And I am forgetting that at this very moment, when I have so little else left! crying in this way when I want better eyes than mine are now for watching the sea. I have shed too many tears in my day; more than a trusting Christian woman should; and now I must keep my eyes dry, and my heart firm for my duty. And I cannot see that I have done any wrong in staying by the duty that God gave me, and the house that I must do it in. With this house, and God’s house . . .” And her thoughts recurred, as

usual, to the blessing of the Sabbath. She should still have a pastor in God's house, if not in her own. And thus she cheered her heart while she bathed her eyes that they might serve for her evening gaze over the sea.

She was destined, however, to be overtaken by dismay on the Sabbath, and in that holy house where she had supposed her peace could never be disturbed. The pastor read and preached from the passage in the 18th chapter of Matthew, which enjoins remonstrance with sinners, first in private, then in the presence of one or two witnesses, and at last before the church. The passage was read so emphatically that Annie's heart beat thick and fast. But this did not prepare her for what followed. In his sermon, the pastor explained that though the Scriptural expression was "If thy brother trespass," the exhortation was equally applicable to any Christian sister who should offend. He declared that if any Christian sister was present who was conscious of having trespassed on the comfort and natural feelings of an afflicted and persecuted personage whom they had the honour to entertain among them, he besought the offending sister to inquire of herself whether she had not been rebuked first alone, then in the presence of a witness—alas! in vain; and whether therefore the time was not come for a rebuke before the church. He would, however, name no one, but leave yet some place for repentance; and so forth.

Annie's natural dismay, terrible as it was, soon yielded before the appeal to her conscience, which the pastor supposed would appal her. She knew that she was right; and in this knowledge she raised her bowed head, and listened more calmly

than many others. If there had been any doubt among the small congregation as to who was meant, Lady Carse would have dispersed it. She sat in the front row, with the minister's family. Unable to restrain her vindictive satisfaction, she started up and pointed with her finger, and nodded at Annie. The pitying calm gaze with which Annie returned the insult went to many hearts, and even to Mrs. Ruthven's so far as that she pulled the lady by the skirt, and implored her to sit down.

There are many precious things which remain always secrets to those who do not deserve to know them. For instance, tyrants know nothing of the animating and delicious reaction which they cause in the souls of their victims. The cheerfulness, sweetness, and joy of their victims has ever been, and will ever be, a perplexity to oppressors. It was so now to Mr. Ruthven, after an act of tyranny perpetrated, as most acts of tyranny are, under a mistaken, an ignorant and arrogant sense of duty. Not only did the widow stand up with others for the closing psalm—her voice was the firmest, sweetest, clearest in the assembly—so sweet and clear that it came back even upon her own ear with a sort of surprise. As for others, all were more or less moved. But their emotion had the common effect of making them draw back from the object of it. After the service, nobody spoke to Annie. She heeded this but little, absorbed as she was in thankfulness at finding that the privileges of God's house were not disturbed—that her relation to Him and her rights of worship were not touched by any fallibility in his minister. As she reached the entrance of the churchyard, Macdonald overtook her, and made her use his arm for the descent

of the irregular steps. A few words from Helsa had put him in possession of the case. He desired the widow not to think for a moment of leaving her house. Everybody wished to do what could be done to reconcile the stranger lady to her abode in the island; but there was a point beyond which he was sure Sir Alexander would not permit encroachment. His advice was to serve and please her in small affairs, and leave it to Sir Alexander to deal with her in such an important one as her having a house to herself. Annie smiled, and said this was exactly her plan.

That evening was, to the inhabitants of the island, the most memorable one of the year—of the generation—of the century. This was not fully known at the time. The most memorable days often appear just like other days till they are past; and though there was some excitement and bustle this evening, no one on the island saw the full meaning of what was before his eyes.

A little before sunset, the widow plainly saw a larger vessel than often visited those seas approaching from the south-west. It was larger than Macdonald's sloop. She was straining her eyes to see whether it had two masts or three, when she heard the children's voices below. She called them up to her platform for the help of their young eyes; but when they came, they could spare little attention for the distant vessel, so full were they of the news that their mother had run down to the harbour to try to speak to some sailors who had landed from a boat which had come up the harbour while everybody was at church. It was such a pity that their father was gone, just at this time, to visit a sick person at Macdonald's farm! But

their mother went directly, as fast as she could run, and Lady Carse and Helsa were to follow her as soon as Helsa had put up a bundle.

To recall Mr. Ruthven was the first thing Annie thought of. She did not venture to send the children over for him, lest their hurry and excitement, or any air of mystery, should give the alarm to Macdonald. She set out alone, doubtful as she was how and how soon she could accomplish the walk, and bitterly lamenting that her son was not within call. With her best exertions, her progress was so slow that she met the pastor a quarter of a mile from Macdonald's house.

Breathless as she was, Mr. Ruthven would have from her a full, true, and particular account of all she knew, and many declarations that she did not know as much again, before he would walk on. At last, however, he did set forth quickly on the shortest path to the harbour, while Annie turned slowly homewards over the ridge.

She was on the hill side, not far from home, when she saw the well-known group of neighbours—the pastor's family—coming homewards, slowly and with many delays. She heard loud angry voices; and when she approached, she saw tokens of distress in them all. Mr. Ruthven was very pale, and Helsa very red. Mrs. Ruthven was in tears, and Lady Carse's clothes and hair were dripping wet. It was clear that she had been in the water.

“Alas! you have missed the boat!” exclaimed Annie.

Lady Carse had just lost the chance of escape, as all believed; and all were now quarrelling as to whose fault it was. Mrs. Ruthven was turning

back from the shore, breathless from haste and vexation, as Lady Carse and Helsa came down. The boat, with several armed men in it, had pushed off when Mrs. Ruthven appeared. They made no reply to her signs, but lay on their oars at a little distance from the beach till Lady Carse and her maid came down. After some delay, and many signals of entreaty from the ladies, the boat again approached; and the man in command of it was told that a lady of quality, wrongfully imprisoned in this island, desired to be carried to the main; and that, once among her friends in Edinburgh, she could give rewards for her escape to any amount. There was a short consultation in the boat, a laugh, and a decisive pull to shore. A sailor jumped out, and seized the lady, to carry her in. Whether it was the unaccountable shout of triumph that she set up, or something else that startled the sailor, he hastily set down his burden on the rock, looked her in the face, and then spoke to his comrades in the boat. They laughed again, but beckoned him on. He placed her in the boat, but she stumbled, swayed over, caught at the side of the boat as she went over, and very nearly upset it. The men swore at her, declared her to be no lady in distress, but a tipsy gipsy, laid her down on the shore, and rowed away. Mr. Ruthven now declared that he could do nothing in such a case. Lady Carse, now sobered from everything but passion, protested that if he had had any sense or presence of mind, he might have detained the strangers till she could produce from her package proof of her rank and quality. If the wranglers could but have known who these strangers were,

and whence came the distant vessel to which their boat belonged, all would have joined in thanksgiving for the lady's escape from their hands.

Annie had no more suspicion of the truth than they. She could only attempt to calm them, and make the best of matters by showing that possibly all might not be over yet. It was now nearly dark. If she could light two lamps for this once, it might bring back the boat. If the people on board were familiar with her light and its purpose, the singular circumstance of its being double might attract their curiosity; if strangers, they might attend to the signal from prudence.

Mr. Ruthven, being extremely cross, could see nothing but nonsense in this plan. Lady Carse, being offended with her friends, thought it the wisest and most promising scheme conceivable. Mr. Ruthven would not hear of spending a night down in the harbour, watching for a boat which would never come. To ask such a thing of him after his Sabbath day's services, and all for a woman's freak, was such a thing as . . . as he would not describe. He could not think of doing such a thing. Lady Carse said he was no friend of hers if he did not. While Mrs. Ruthven trembled and wept, Annie said that if she could only learn where Rollo was, all would be easy. Rollo would watch in the harbour, she was sure.

Mr. Ruthven caught at this suggestion for saving his night's rest, and went off to seek Rollo; not so rapidly however but that he heard the remark sent after him by Lady Carse, that it was a pretty thing for a man to stand up in his pulpit, where nobody could answer him, and lecture people about Chris-

tian duty, and then to be outdone in the first trial by the first of his flock that came into comparison with him. Annie could not bear to hear this. She desired Helsa to assist Lady Carse to bed, that her clothes might be speedily dried, in readiness for any sudden chance of escape.

CHAPTER XV.

ANNIE'S NEWS.

DULL and sad was the first meal at the Ruthvens' the next morning. Lady Carse could eat nothing, having cried herself ill, and being in feverish expectation still of some news—she did not know what. Mr. Ruthven found fault with the children so indefatigably, that they gulped down their porridge and slipped out under Helsa's arm as she opened the door, and away to the next house, where the voice of scolding was never heard. The pastor next began wondering whether Rollo was still playing the watchman in the harbour—tired and hungry; and he was proceeding to wonder how a clever lad like Rollo could let himself be made such a fool of by his mother, when Helsa cut short the soliloquy by telling that Rollo was at home. He had come up just now with the steward.

“The steward!” cried Lady Carse, springing to her feet. “I knew it! I see it all!” And she wrung her hands.

“What is it? my dear love, my precious friend,—what is the matter? Compose yourself!” said Mrs. Ruthven, soothingly.

But the lady would not hear of being soothed. It was plain now that the distant vessel, the boat, the sailors, were sent by her friends. If Mr. Ruthven had only been quick enough to let them know who she was, she should by this time have

been safe. How could they suppose that she was Lady Carse, dressed as she was, agitated as she was! A word from Mr. Ruthven, the least readiness on his part, would have saved her. And now here was the steward come to baffle all. Sir Alexander Macdonald had had eyes for her deliverers, though her nearest friends had none. Annie was her best friend, after all. It was Annie's ball of thread, no doubt, that had roused her friends, and made them send this vessel; and Annie alone had shown any sense last night.

Mr. Ruthven did not understand or approve of very sudden conversions; and this was really a sudden conversion, after pointing at the widow Fleming in church yesterday. He ought to state too that he did not approve of pointing at individuals in church. He should be sorry that his children should learn the habit; and."

"You would?" interrupted Lady Carse. "Then take care I do not point at her next sabbath as the only friend I have on this island."

"My dear creature!" said Mrs. Ruthven, "pray do not say such severe things: you will break my heart. You do the greatest injustice to our affection. Only let me show you! If this wicked steward prevents your escape now, I will get away somehow, and tell your story to all the world; and they shall send another vessel for you; and I will come with it, and take you away. I will indeed."

"Nonsense, my dear," said Lady Carse.

"Nonsense, my dear," said the pastor.

Lady Carse laughed at this accord. Mrs. Ruthven cried.

"If you get away," said Lady Carse, more

gently, "you may be sure you will not leave me behind."

"It is all nonsense, the whole of it, about this vessel and the steward," Mr. Ruthven pronounced. "The steward comes, as usual, for the feather-rent."

"It is not the season for the feather-rent," declared Lady Carse.

"The steward comes when it suits his convenience," decided the pastor; "the season is a matter of but secondary regard."

"You are mistaken," said the lady. "I have lived here longer than you; and I know that he comes at the regular seasons, and at no other time."

"O, here are the children," observed Mrs. Ruthven; hoping to break up the party. "My dears, don't leave the room; I want you to stay beside me. There now, you may each carry your own porridge-bowl into the kitchen, and then you may come back for papa's and mine."

Mr. Ruthven stalked out into the garden, to find fault with his cabbages, if they were not growing dutifully. Lady Carse stood by the window, fretted at the thick seamy glass which prevented her seeing anything clearly. Mrs. Ruthven sat down to sew.

"Mama," said Adam, presently, "what is a Pretender?"

"A what, my dear?—a Pretender? I really scarcely know. That is a question that you should ask your papa. A Pretender?"

"No, no, Adam. It is Adventurer. That was what the steward said. I know it, because that is the name of one of papa's books. I will show it you."

"I know that," said Adam. "But widow Fleming called it Pretender, too."

"What's that?" cried Lady Carse, turning hastily from the window. "What are you talking about?"

The children looked at each other, as they usually did when somebody must answer the lady.

"What are you talking about?"

"The steward says the Pretender is come: and we do not know what that means."

"The Pretender come!" cried Mrs. Ruthven, letting fall her work. "What shall we do for news? Run, my dears, and ask widow Fleming all about it. I can't leave Lady Carse, you see."

The children declared they dared not go. Widow Fleming was busy; and she had sent them away.

"Then go and tell your father. Ask him to come in."

Mr. Ruthven was shocked into his usual manners when he saw Lady Carse unable to stand or speak. His assurances that he did not believe her in any personal danger, if the report were ever so true, were thrown away. Her consternation was about a different aspect of the matter. She at once concluded that the cause of the Stuarts would be triumphant. She saw in imagination all her enemies victorious—her husband and Lord Lovat successful in all their plottings, high in power and glory; while she, who could have given timely intimation of their schemes—she who could have saved the throne and kingdom—was confined to this island like an eagle in a cage. For some time she sat paralyzed by her emotions; then she rose and went in silence to Annie's dwelling. The steward was just departing, and he seemed in the

more haste for the lady's appearance; but Annie stopped him—gravely desired him to remain while she told the lady what it concerned her to know. She then said,

“ I learn from the steward, Madam, that it is known throughout Edinburgh that you are still in life, and that you are confined to some out-of-the-way place; though, the steward believes, the real place is not known.”

“ It is not known,” the steward declared; “ and it is anything but kind of you, in my opinion, Mrs. Fleming, to delude Lady Carse with any hope of escape. Her escape is, and will always be, impossible.”

“ I think it my business,” said Annie, “ to inform the lady of whatever I hear of her affairs. I think she ought to have the comfort of knowing that her friends are alarmed: and I am sure I have no right to conceal it from her.”

The steward walked away, while the lady stood lost in reverie. One set of ideas had driven out the other. She had forgotten all about the Jacobite news, and she stood staring with wide-open eyes, as the vision of her escape and triumph once more intoxicated her imagination.

Annie gently drew her attention to the facts, telling her that it was clear that the ball of thread had done its duty well. The alarm had begun with Mr. Hope, the advocate. He had demanded that the coffin supposed to contain the remains of Lady Carse should be taken up and searched. When he appeared likely to obtain his demand, Lord Carse had avoided the scandal of the proceeding by acknowledging that it had been a sham funeral. Annie believed that now the lady had

only to wait as patiently as she could, in the reasonable hope that her friends would not rest till they had rescued her.

At this moment Lady Carse's quick sense was caught by Adam's pulling the widow's gown and asking in a whisper, "What is a Pretender?" and by Annie's soft reply, "Hush, my dear!"

"Hush! do you say?" exclaimed Lady Carse, with a start. "What do you mean by saying 'hush'? Is the Pretender come? Answer me. Has the Pretender landed in Scotland?"

"He has not landed, Madam. He is in yonder vessel. You had a great deliverance, Madam, in not being taken away by his boat last night."

"Deliverance! There is no deliverance for me," said the lady. "Every hope is dashed. There is no kindness in holding out new hopes to me. My enemies will not let me stay here now my friends know where to find me. I shall be carried to St. Kilda, or some other horrible place; or, if they have not time to take care of me while they are setting up their new king, they will murder me. O! I shall never live to see Edinburgh again: and my husband and Lovat will be lording it there, and laughing at me and my vain struggles during all these years, while I lie helpless in my grave, or tossing like a weed in these cruel seas. If God will but grant my prayer, and let me haunt them. Stop, stop: do not go away."

"I must, Madam, if you talk so."

"Stop. I want to know about this Pretender. Why did you not tell us sooner? Why not the moment you knew?"

"I considered it was the steward's business to tell what he thought proper: but I have no ob-

jection to give all the particulars. I know he whom they call Prince Charlie is in yonder vessel, which carries eighteen guns. It cannot hold many soldiers; and Sir Alexander does not believe that he will be joined by any from his islands. He is thought to have a good many officers with him.....”

“How many?”

“Some say twenty; some say forty. It is pretty sure that Glengarry will join him.....”

“Glengarry! Then all is lost.”

“Sir Alexander thinks not. He and Macleod have written to the Lord President, that not a man from these islands will join.”

“They have written to Duncan Forbes! Now, if they were wise, they would send me to him.... You need not look so surprised. He is a friend of mine; and glad enough he would be at this moment to know what I could tell him of the Edinburgh Jacobites. Where is the Lord President at this time?”

“In the north, I think, preparing against the rising.”

“Aye; at his own place near Inverness. If I could but get a letter to him.....Perhaps he knows already that I am not dead. If I could see Sir Alexander! O! there are so many ways opening, if I had but the least help from any body to use the opportunity! Sir Alexander ought to know that I am a loyal subject of King George; and that my enemies are not.”

“True,” said Annie. “I will endeavour to speak to the steward again before he sails, and tell him that.”

“I will speak to him, myself. Ah! I see your

unwillingness: but I have learnt—it would be strange if I had not—to trust nobody with my business. With Prince Charlie so near, there is no saying who is a Jacobite, and who is not. I will see the steward myself.”

Annie knew that this would fail; and so it did. The steward's dispositions were not improved by the lady's method of pleading. He told her that Sir Alexander's loyalty to King George had nothing to do with his pledge that Lord Carse should never more be troubled by her. He had pledged his honour that she should cause no more disturbance: and no political difficulties would make him forfeit his word. The steward grew dogged during the interview.

Did her friends in Edinburgh know that she was alive? she demanded. “Perhaps so.”

Did they know where she was? “Perhaps so.”

Then, should she be carried somewhere else? “Perhaps so.”

To some wretched, outlandish place—further in the ocean? “Perhaps so.”

Would they murder her rather than yield her up? “Perhaps so.”

The steward's heart smote him as he said this; but he forgave himself on the plea that the vixen brought it all upon her herself. So, when she asked the further question,

“Is there any chance for the Pretender?—any danger that he may succeed?” the answer still was

“Perhaps so.”

Mr. Ruthven, who was prowling about in search of news, heard these last words; and they produced a great effect upon him.

CHAPTER XVI.

TIMELY EVASION.

MR. RUTHVEN was walking up and down his garden that afternoon, in a disturbed state of mind, when his wife came to him, and asked him what he thought Lady Carse could be in want of. She was searching among his books and boxes as if she wanted something. He hastened in.

“Yes;” Lady Carse replied, in answer to his question. “I want that pistol that used to be kept on the top of your bed. You need not look so frightened. I am not going to shoot you, nor anybody you ought to care for.

“I should like to understand, however,” observed the pastor. “It is unusual for ladies to employ fire-arms, I believe, except in apprehension of the midnight thief: and I am not aware of any danger from burglars in these islands.”

“Why no,” replied the lady. “We have no great temptation to offer to burglars; and nothing to lose worth the waste of powder and bullet.”

“Then, if I may ask”

“O yes; you may ask what I want the pistol for. It strikes me that the boat from yonder vessel may possibly be sent back for me yet. They may think me a prize worth having, if the stupid people carried my story right. I would go with them—I would go joyfully—for the chance of shooting that young gentleman through the head.”

“Young gentleman!” repeated Mr. Ruthven, aghast.

“Yes, the young Pretender. My father lost his life for shooting a Lord President. His daughter is the one to go beyond him, by getting rid of a Prince Charlie. It would be a tale for history, that he was disposed of among these islands by the bravery of a woman. Why, you look so aghast,” she continued, turning from the husband to the wife, “that. . . . Yes, yes. O, ho! I have found you out!—you are Jacobites! I see it in your faces. I see it. There now, don’t deny it. Jacobites you are—and henceforth my enemies.”

With stammering eagerness, both husband and wife denied the charge. The fact was, they were not Jacobites; neither had they any sustaining loyalty on the other side. They understood very little of the matter, either way; and dreaded, above everything, being pressed to take any part. They thought it very hard to have their lot cast in precisely that corner of the empire where it was first necessary to take some part before knowing what the nation, or the majority, meant to do. First, they prevented the lady’s finding the pistol, as the safest proceeding on the whole; next, they wished themselves a thousand miles off, so earnestly and so often, that it occurred to them to consider whether they could not accomplish a part of this desire, and get a hundred miles away, or fifty, or twenty—somewhere at least out of sight of the Pretender’s privateer.

In a few hours the privateer was out of sight—“Gone about north,” the steward declared, “for supplies:” as nobody was willing to give them any help while under the shadow of Macdonald and Macleod,

In the evening, little Kate rushed into Annie's cottage, silently threw her arms about the widow's neck, and almost strangled her with a tight hug. Adam followed, and struggled to do the same. When he wanted to speak, he began to cry; and grievously he cried, sobbing out,

"What will you do without me! You can't see the boats at sea well now; and soon, perhaps, you will hardly be able to see them at all. And I was to have helped you: and now what will you do?"

"And papa would not let us come sooner," said the weeping Kate, "because we had to pack all our things in such a hurry. He said we need not come to you till he came to bid you good-bye. But I made haste, and then I came."

"But, my dears, when are you going? where are you going?"

"O, we are going directly: the steward is in such a hurry! And papa says we are not to cry; and we are not to come back any more. And we shall never get any of those beautiful shells on the long sands, that you promised me; and...."

Here Mr. Ruthven entered. He had no time to sit down. He told the children that they must not cry; but that they might kiss their friend, and thank her for her kindness to them, and tell her that they should never see her any more. There was so much difficulty with the sobbing children on this last point, that he gave it up for want of time, threatening to see about making them more obedient when he was settled on the mainland. While they clung to Annie, and hid their faces in her gown, he explained to her that his residence in this island had not answered to his expectations;

that he did not find it a congenial sphere ; that he was a man of peace, to whom neither domestic discord, nor the prospect of war and difficulty without, were agreeable ; and that he was, therefore, taking advantage of the steward's vessel to remove himself to some quiet retreat, where the pastoral authority might be exercised without disturbance, and a man like himself might be placed in a more congenial sphere. He was then careful to explain that, in speaking of domestic discord, he was far from referring to Mrs. Ruthven, who, he thought he might say, however liable to the failings of humanity, was not particularly open to blame on the ground of conjugal obedience. She was, in fact, an excellent wife ; and he should be grieved to cause the most transient impression to the contrary. It was, in truth, another person, a casual inmate of his family, whom he had in his eye ; a lady who”

“ I understand, Sir. If you will allow me to go home with you”

“ Permit me to conclude what I was saying, Mrs. Fleming. That unhappy lady, in favour of whose temper it is impossible to say anything, has caused us equal uneasiness by another tendency of late, a tendency to indulge”

But Annie did not, at such a moment, stand upon ceremony. She was by this time leading the children home, one in each hand.

“ So you are really going away, and immediately,” said she to Mrs. Ruthven.

“ Immediately,” replied the heated, anxious Mrs. Ruthven.

“ Where is Lady Carse ? ”

The question brought tears again into Mrs. Ruthven's swollen eyes.

“ I do not know. Mr. Ruthven wishes to be gone before she returns from her walk.”

“ We leave her the entire house to herself,” declared the pastor, now entering. “ Will you bear our farewell message to her, and wish her joy from us of being possessor of the whole house; and of”

“ Here she comes,” said Annie, quietly. “ Lady Carse,” said she, “ this is a remarkable day. Here is another way opening for your deliverance—a way which appears to me so clear that you have only to be patient for a few weeks or months before your best wishes are fulfilled. Mrs. Ruthven will now be able to do for you what she has so often longed to do. She is going to the main—perhaps to Edinburgh; she will see Mr. Hope, and others of your friends; and tell your story. She will”

“ She will not have anything of the sort to do,” interrupted Lady Carse. “ I shall go and do it myself. I told her, some time since, that whenever she quitted this island I would not be left behind. I shall do my own business myself, if you please.”

“ That is well,” interposed the pastor; “ because I promised the steward, passed my solemn word to him, as a condition of my departure, that it should never become known through me or mine that Lady Carse had ever been seen by any of us. I entirely approve of Lady Carse managing her own affairs.”

Annie found means to declare solemnly to Mrs. Ruthven her conviction that no such promise could be binding on her, and that it was her bounden duty to spare no effort for the poor lady's release.

She was persuaded that Mrs. Ruthven thought and felt with her; and that something effectual would at last be done.

The children now most needed her consolations. "Do not be afraid," she said cheerfully to them. "I shall never forget you. I shall think of you every day. Whenever you see a sea-bird winging over this way, send me your love: and when I see our birds go south, I will send my love to you."

"And whenever," said Helsa, "you see a light over the sea, you will think of widow Fleming's lamp; won't you?"

"And whenever," said Lady Carse, with a solemnity which froze up the children's tears, and made them look in her face, "whenever, in this world or the next, you see a quiet angel keeping watch over a sinful, unhappy mortal, you may think of widow Fleming and me. Will you?"

The awe-struck children promised, with a sincerity and warmth which touched Lady Carse with a keen sense of humiliation; not the less keen because she had brought it upon herself by a good impulse.

The pastor and his family were presently gone; and without Lady Carse. The steward guarded against that by bringing Macdonald to fasten her into her house, and guard it, till the boat should be out of reach.

Annie did not intrude upon her unhappy neighbour for the first few hours. She thought it better to wait till she was wished for.

"Our pastor gone!" thought she, as she sat alone. "No more children's voices in this dwelling! No more worship in the church on Sabbaths! Thus is our Father always giving and

taking away, that we may fix our expectations on him alone. But he always leaves us enough. He leaves us our duty and his Sabbaths, whether the church be open or in ruins. And He has left me also an afflicted neighbour to comfort and strengthen. Now that she thinks she depends on me alone, I may be the better able to lead her to depend on Him."

And she was presently absorbed in meditating how best to do this most needful work.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE LAMP BURNS.

ANNIE had supposed that her life would be almost as quiet an one as it used to be when the minister and his family were gone. Lady Carse was her neighbour, to be sure; but every day showed more and more that even to such restless beings as Lady Carse, a time of quiet must come. Her health and strength had been wasting for some months, and now a change came over her visibly from week to week. She rarely moved many yards from the house, spending hours of fine weather in lying on the grass looking over the sea; and when confined to the house by the cold, in dozing on the settle.

This happened just when her prison was, as it were, thrown open, or, at least, much less carefully guarded than ever before. Prince Charlie's successes were so great as to engross all minds in this region, and almost throughout the whole of the kingdom. Wherever the Macdonalds and Macleods had influence, there was activity, day and night. Every man in either clan, every youth capable of bearing arms, was raised and drilled, and held in readiness to march, as soon as arms should be provided by the government.

Annie had many anxieties about Rollo,—many feelings of longing and dread to hear where he was, and what he was doing. The first good news

she had was that of the whole population of Skye and the neighbouring islands, not one man had joined the Pretender. The news was carefully spread, in order that it might produce its effect on any waverers, that Sir Alexander Macdonald had written to Lord President Forbes that not one man under him or Macleod had joined the Pretender's army; and that he should soon be ready to march a force of several hundred men, if arms could be sent or provided for them against their arrival at Inverness. Meantime, no day passed without the men being collected in parties, and exercised with batons, in the absence of fire-arms. Rollo came to the very first drill which took place on the island; and great was his mother's relief; and great the satisfaction with which she made haste to equip him, according to her small means, for a march to Inverness.

Here was an object too for Lady Carse. She fretted sadly, but not quite idly, about her strength failing just now when boats came to the island so often that she might have had many chances of escape if she could now have borne night watching, and exposure to weather and fatigue. She complained and wept much; but all the time she worked as hard as Annie to prepare Rollo for military service; for her very best chance now appeared to be his seeing Lord President Forbes, and telling him her story. The widow quite agreed in this; and it became the most earnest desire of the whole party,—Helsa's sympathies being drawn in,—that the summons to march might arrive. Somebody was always looking over towards Skye; and there was so much traffic on these seas at present, that some new excitement

was perpetually arising. Now a meal-bark arrived, telling of the capture of others by the Prince's privateer: and next there was a seizure of fish for the king's service. Now all eyes were engaged, for days together, in watching the man-of-war which hovered round the coasts to prevent the rebels being reinforced by water, and arms being landed from foreign vessels: and then there were rumours, and sometimes visions, of suspicious boats skulking among the islands, or a strange sail being visible on the horizon. Such excitements made the island appear a new place, and changed entirely the life of the inhabitants. The brave enjoyed all this: the timid sickened at it; and Lady Carse wept over it as coming too late for her.

"The lady looks ill," the steward observed to widow Fleming, one day when, as often happened now, he came without notice. "She is so shrunk, she is not like the same person."

Annie told how she had lost strength and spirits of late. She had not been down even to the harbour for two months.

"Ay, it is a change," said the steward. "I was saying to Macdonald just now that we have been rather careless of the lady of late, having had our heads so full of other matters. I almost wondered that she had not slipped through our fingers in the hurry and bustle: but I see now how that is. However, Macdonald will keep a somewhat stricter watch; for, as I told him, it concerns Sir Alexander's honour all the more that she should not get loose, now that those who committed her to his charge are under suspicion about their politics.—Ah! you see the secret is getting out now, —the reason of her punishment. She wanted to

ruin them, no doubt, by telling what she knew; and they put her out of the way for safety."

"Is her husband with the Pretender then? And is Lord Lovat on that side? They are the two she is the most angry with."

"Lord Carse is safe enough. He is a prudent man. He could not get into favour with the king and the minister:—they knew too much harm of him for that. So he has made himself a courtier of the Prince of Wales. He has no idea of being thrust upon the dangers of rebellion while the event is uncertain; so he attaches himself in a useless way to the reigning family. And if Prince Charlie should succeed, Lord Carse can easily show that he never favoured King George or his minister, or did them any good.—As for Lovat, he is ill and quiet at home."

"Which side is he on?"

"He complains bitterly of his son being disobedient to him, and put upon his disobedience by his Jacobite acquaintance. If the young man joins Prince Charlie, it is thought that his father will stand by King George, that the family estates may be safe whichever way the war ends.—Bless me! what a sigh! One would think.... Come now, what's the matter?"

"The wickedness of it!" said Annie.

"O! is that all? Lovat's wickedness is nothing new; and what better could you expect from his son? By the same rule, I have great expectations of your son. As you are sound, he will be sound too, and do his king and country good service. You are both on the same side, and not like the master of Lovat and his father."

"We have no estates to corrupt our minds,"

observed Annie. "We have only our duty to care for."

"Ay, then, you are on the same side."

"Rollo is ready to march with the men of these islands. I am on no side, Sir. I do not understand the matter, and I have nothing to do with it. There is no occasion for me to take any side."

"Why yes; as it happens, there is, Mrs. Fleming: and that is one of the things that brought me here to-day. Sir Alexander Macdonald desires that you will oblige him by not burning your lamp in the night till the troubles are over."

"I am sorry that there is anything in which I cannot oblige Sir Alexander Macdonald: but I must burn my lamp."

"But hear: you do not know his reasons. There are some suspicious vessels skulking about among the islands; and you ought to show them no favour till they show what they are."

"You do not think, Sir, you cannot surely think that anybody on this island is in danger from the enemy. There is nothing to bring them here,—no arms, nor wealth of any kind;—nothing that it would be worth the trouble of coming to take."

"O no: you are all safe enough. No enemy would lose their time here. But that is no reason why you should give them help and comfort with your beacon-light."

"You mean, Sir, that if a storm drives them hither, or they lose their way, you would have them perish. Yes; that is what you mean, and what I cannot do. I must burn my lamp."

"But, my good friend, consider what you are doing. Consider the responsibility if you should succour the king's enemies!"

“ I did consider it well, Sir, some years ago, and made up my mind. That was when the pirates were on the coast.”

“ You don't mean that you would have lighted pirates to shore ? ”

“ I could not refuse to save them from drowning : and He who set me my duty blessed the deed.”

“ I remember hearing something of that. But if the pirates did no mischief, your neighbours owe you nothing for that. You may thank the poverty of the island.”

“ Perhaps so,” said Annie, smiling. “ And if so, I am sure we may thank God for the poverty of the island which permits us to save men's lives, instead of letting them drown. And now you see, Sir . . . ”

“ I see you are as wilful on this point as I heard you were. I would not believe it, because I always thought you a superior woman. But now— I wish I could persuade you to see your duty better, Mrs. Fleming.”

“ As my duty appears to me, Sir, it is to save people's lives without regard to who they are, and what their business is.”

“ If the Pretender should come . . . ”

“ He would go as he came,” said Annie, quietly. “ He would get nothing here that could hurt the king, while the men of the island are gone to Inverness.”

“ Well, to be sure, if you would succour and comfort pirates, there is nobody whom you would not help.”

“ That is true, Sir.”

“ But it is very dangerous, Mrs. Fleming. Do you know the consequences of aiding the enemy ? ”

“I know the consequences of there being no light above the harbour,” said Annie, in a low voice.

The steward knew it was useless to say more. He thought it better to put into her hand some newspapers which contained a startling account of the progress of the rebels, embellished with many terrifying fictions of their barbarity, such as were greedily received by the alarmists of the time.

“Here,” said he. “You can look these over, while I go to speak to Macdonald about removing the lady to some remoter place while we have only women on the island. Pray look over these papers, and then you will see what sort of people you may chance to bring upon your neighbours, if you persist in burning your lamp. But Sir Alexander must put forth his authority,—even use force, if necessary. What do you say to that?”

“Some old words,” said Annie, smiling, “given to those who are brought before governors. It shall be given me in that same hour what I shall speak.”

“I will look in for the papers as I return,” said the steward. “You are as wilful on your own points as your neighbour. But you must give way, as you preach that she ought. . . .”

“I do not preach that, Sir, I assure you. I wish, for her own peace, that she could yield herself to God’s disposal: but I would have her, in the strength of law and justice, resist the oppression of man.”

The steward smiled, nodded, and left Annie to read the newspapers.

The time was short. Lady Carse was asleep; but Annie awoke her, and left one paper with her

while she went home to read the other. She was absorbed in the narrative of the march of the rebels southwards, and their intention of proceeding to London, eating children, as the newspaper said, after the manner of Highlanders, all the way as they went, when Lady Carse burst in, trembling from head to foot, and unable to speak. She showed to Annie a short paragraph which told that a vessel chartered by Mr. Hope, advocate of Edinburgh, and bound to the Western Islands, had put in to the Horseshoe harbour in Lorn, to land a lady whom the captain refused to carry to her destination, through a quarrel on the ground of difference of political sentiment. The lady, wife of a minister of the kirk, had sought the aid of the resident tenant to be escorted home through the disturbed districts in Argyle, while the vessel proceeded on its way,—not unwatched, however, as Mr. Hope's attachment to the house of Stuart was no secret, &c. &c.

The widow was perplexed; but Lady Carse knew that Mr. Hope, her lawyer and her friend, was a Jacobite,—the only fault he had, she declared. She was persuaded that the lady was Mrs. Ruthven, and that the vessel was on its way to rescue her,—might arrive at any hour of the day or night.

“But,” said Annie, “this lady is loyal to King George, and you reproached the Ruthvens for being on the other side.”

“O! I was wrong about her, no doubt. I detest him: but she is a good creature; and I was quite wrong ever to suspect her.”

“And you think your loyalty to the king would do you no harm with Mr. Hope? You think he

would exert himself for you without thinking of your politics?"

"Why, don't you see what is before your eyes?" cried Lady Carse. "Is it not there, as plain as black and white can make it?"

The fact was so, though the lady's reasoning was not good. The vessel, with armed men in it, was sent by Mr. Hope to rescue Lady Carse; and Mrs. Ruthven was to act as guide. In consequence of a quarrel between the captain and her, she was set ashore at the place where the little town of Oban has since arisen; and the vessel sailed on, out of sight. It was an illegal proceeding of Mr. Hope's, and resorted to only when his attempts to obtain a warrant from the proper authority to search for and liberate Lady Carse were frustrated by the influence of her husband and his friends.

"He will be coming! Burn the paper!" cried Lady Carse impatiently, looking from the door.

"Better not. Indeed we had better not," said Annie, quietly. "They have no suspicion, or they would not have let us see the paper. They do not know that Mr. Hope is your agent; and Mrs. Ruthven's name is not mentioned. If we do not return both the papers, there will be suspicion; and you will be carried to St. Kilda. If we quietly return both papers, the danger may pass."

"O! burn it, and say it was accident. How slow you are!"

"I cannot tell a lie," said Annie. "And the steward would only get another copy of the paper, and look over it carefully.—No, we have only to give him back the papers, and thank him, without agitation."

“ I cannot do that,” exclaimed Lady Carse. “ If you will not tell a lie in such a case, I shall act one. I shall go and pretend to be asleep. I could not contain myself to speak to that man, with my deliverers almost within hearing, perhaps, and that detestable St. Kilda within sight.”

She commanded herself so far as to appear asleep, when the steward looked in, on his return. Annie remarked on the news of the rebels, and saw him depart evidently unaware of the weighty nature of what he carried in his pocket.

CHAPTER XVIII.

OPENINGS.

THE autumn of this year is even now held in memory in the island as the dearest ever known. The men were all gone to Inverness, to act under the orders of President Forbes in defending the king's cause; and the women they left behind pined for news which seldom or never came. As the days grew short and dark, there was none of the activity and mirth within doors which in northern climates usually meet the advances of winter. In the cluster of houses about Macdonald's farm, there was dulness and silence in the evenings, and anxious thoughts about fathers, husbands, and brothers, with dread of the daylight which would bring round the perpetual ineffectual watch for a boat on the waters, bearing news of the brave companies of the Macdonalds and Macleods. Sir Alexander remained in Skye, to watch against treason and danger there, while Macleod had gone with the two companies. Such a thing as murmuring against the chief was never heard of; but there were few of the women who did not silently think, now and then, that Sir Alexander might let them have a little more news—might consider their anxiety, and send a messenger when he had tidings from Inverness. This was unjust to Sir Alexander, who was no better off for news than themselves. The rebels were so far successful that messengers could not carry letters

with any security by land or sea. It was only by folding his notes so small as to admit of their being hidden in corners of the dress that the president could get them conveyed to the authorities at Edinburgh; and his correspondence with the Government was managed by sending messengers in open boats to Berwick, whence the garrison officer forwarded the despatches to London. In such a state of things, the inhabitants of remote western islands must bear suspense as well as they could.

No one bore it so well as the widow Fleming. Her only son was in one of the absent companies; she had no other near relation in the world; and she had on her hands a sinking and heart-sick neighbour, whose pains of suspense were added to her own. Yet Annie was the most cheerful person now on the island. When Helsa was fatigued and dispirited by her attendance on Lady Carse, and was sent home for a day's holiday, she always came back with alacrity, saying that after all, the Macdonalds' side of the island was the most dismal of the two. Nobody there cared to sing, whereas Annie would always sing when asked, and often was heard to do so when alone. And she had such a store of tales about the old sea-kings, and the heroes of these islands, and of Scottish history, that some of the younger women came night after night to listen. As they knitted or spun, or let fall their work, while their eyes were fixed on Annie, they forgot the troubles of their own time, and the blasts and rains through which they should have to find their way home.

At the end of these evenings, Lady Carse often declared herself growing better; and she then went to sleep on the imagination that she should soon be

restored to Edinburgh life by Mr. Hope's means, and be happy at last. In the morning, she always declared herself sinking, and fretted over the hardship of dying just when her release was drawing near. Annie thought she was sinking, and never contradicted her when she said so; but yet she tried to bring some of the cheerfulness of the evenings into the morning. She sympathised in the pain of suspense, and of increasing weakness when life was brightening; but she steadily spoke of hope.

She was sincerely convinced that efforts which could not fail were making for Lady Carse's release, and she thought it likely that the mother and children would meet on earth, though it were only to exchange a hope that they might meet in heaven. Sincerely expecting some great and speedy change in the poor lady's fortunes, she could dwell upon the prospect from day to day with a sympathy which did not disappoint even Lady Carse. Every morning she rose with the feeling that great things might happen before night; and every night she assured her eager neighbour that no doubt somebody had been busy on her behalf during the day. Whether Lady Carse owned it to herself or not, this was certainly the least miserable winter she had passed since she had left Edinburgh.

"I am better, I am sure," she joyfully declared one night: "better in every way. How do I look? Tell me how I look."

"Sadly thin; not so as to do justice to the good food the steward sent you," said Annie, cheerfully. "I should like to see these little hands not quite so thin."

"Ah! that is nothing. Everybody is thin and

smoke-dried at the end of a stormy winter," declared Lady Carse. "But I feel so much better! You say it is hope; but you see how well I bear suspense."

"I always have thought," said Annie, "that nothing is so good for us all as happiness and peace. Your happiness in hoping to see your children soon, and in obtaining justice, has done you a great deal of good; and I trust there is much more in store yet."

"O yes; and when I get back to my friends again, I shall be happier than I was. We learn some things as we go on in life. I sometimes think that I should in some respects act differently if I had to live my life over again."

"We all feel that," said Annie.

"You know that feeling? Well, there have been some things in myself which I rather wonder at now; some things that I would not do now. I once struck my husband."

"Once!" thought Annie in amazement.

"And I think I may have been too peremptory with the children. There was nobody then to lead me to consider such things as I do when I am with you; but I believe now that if I were at home again . . . I hope . . . I think . . ."

"What will you do if it pleases God to restore you to your home?"

"Why, I *have* been told that they were afraid of me at home. Heaven knows why! for I should have thought that pompous, heartless, rigid, tyrannical wretch, my husband, was the one to be afraid of; and not a warm-hearted creature like me."

"Perhaps they were afraid of him too."

"O yes, to be sure; and that is why I am here."

But they need not have cared for anything I say under an impulse. They might have known that I love people when they do me justice. That, I own, I cannot dispense with. I must have justice. But if people give me my due, I am ready enough to love them."

"And how will you do differently now, if you get home?"

"I think I would be more dignified than I sometimes have been. I would rely more upon myself. I may have encouraged my enemies by letting them see how they could wound my sensitive feelings. I should not have been so ill-treated by the whole world if I had not made some mistake of that kind. I would rely more on myself, and let them see that they could not touch my peace. Would not that be right?"

"Certainly; by your having a peace which they could not touch."

There was a short pause; after which Lady Carse said, in no unamiable tone,

"I do not say these things by way of asking your advice. I know my own feelings and circumstances, and the behaviour of my family to me, better than you can do. I may be left to judge for myself; but it is natural, when a summons may come any day, to tell you what I think of the past; and of how I shall act in the time to come."

"I quite understand that," said Annie. "And I like to hear all you like to tell me without judging or advising, unless you ask me."

"Well, I fairly own to you—and you may take the confession for what it is worth—if I had to live the last twenty years over again, I should in some respects act differently. I now believe that

I have said and done some things that I had better not. But I was driven to it. I have been most cruelly treated."

"You have."

"And if they had only known how to treat me! Why, you are not afraid of me, are you?"

"Not in the least."

"And you never were?"

"Never."

"Why, there now! But you are a woman of sense."

"I am not afraid of you, and never was," said Annie, looking calmly in her face; "but I can understand how some people might be."

"Not people of sense," exclaimed Lady Carse quickly.

"Perhaps not; but we do not expect all that we have dealings with to be people of sense."

"No, indeed! Nobody need ever look for sense in Lord Carse, for one. Well! I am so glad you never were afraid of me; and I am sure, moreover, that you love me: you are so kind to me!"

"I do," said Annie, smiling in reply to the wistful gaze.

Lady Carse's eyes filled with tears.

"Good night! God bless you!" said she.

"She says," thought Annie, "that I may take her confession for what it is worth. How little she knows the worth of that confession!—a confession that any acquaintance she has would blush or mock at, and that any pastor in Scotland would rebuke! but to one who knows her as I do, how precious it is! I like to be called to rejoice with the neighbours when a child is born into the world: but it is a greater thing to sit here alone and rejoice over

the birth of a new soul in this poor lady. It is but a feeble thing, this new-born soul—born so much too late; it is little better than blind and helpless, and with hard struggles coming on before it has strength to meet them. But still it is breathing with God's breath; and it may come freely to Christ. Christ always spoke to souls; and what were the years of man's life to him? So I take it as an invitation in such a case as this, when he says, 'Suffer the little children to come unto me.' O! may the way be kept clear for this infant soul to come to him!"

Annie had all the kindly and cheerful instincts which simple hearts have everywhere; and among them the wish to welcome the newly born with music. With the same feeling which makes the people of many a heathen island and Christian country pour out their music round the dwelling which is gladdened by a new birth, Annie now sang a cheerful religious welcome to the young conscience which she trusted must henceforth live and grow for ever. Her voice was heard next door, just so as to be favourable to rest. Without knowing the occasion of the song, the lady reposed upon it; and without knowing it, Annie sang her charge to sleep as she had often done when Rollo was an infant on her knee.

When at daylight she rose to put out her lamp, and observe the weather, she saw what made her dress quickly, instead of going to bed for her needful morning hour of sleep. A boat was making for the harbour through the difficulties of the wintry sea. It rose and was borne on the long swell so fast and so fearfully, that it appeared as if nothing could save it from dashing on the ledges

of projecting rock ; and then, before it reached them, it sank out of sight, to be lifted up and borne along as before. There were four rowers, a steersman, and two others, muffled in cloaks. Annie watched them till the boat disappeared in the windings of the harbour ; and she was out on the hill-side, in the cold February wind, when she saw the whole party ascending from the shore, and taking the road to Macdonald's.

Here was news ! There must be news. Better not tell even Helsa till she had heard the news. So the widow made what haste she could by the nearer road ; but her best haste could not compare with the ordinary pace of the strangers. They had arrived long before she reached Macdonald's gate.

She walked straight in : and as she did so, one of the gentlemen who was standing before the fire glanced at another who was walking up and down.

"We need no sentinels here, my Lord," said the latter, in reply to the glance. "There are none but women and children on the island, and they are all loyally disposed."

"This is Sir Alexander Macdonald," said the hostess to Annie. And then she told the chief that this was the widow Fleming, who had no doubt come to obtain tidings of her son, who had gone with the company under Macleod.

"The Lord President will give you more exact news of the company than I can," said Sir Alexander. "I only know that my people are marched to Aberdeen, to protect that city from the insolence of the rebels."

The President, who was sitting by the fire, looked up kindly, and cheerfully told the widow that he had good news to give of the company

from these islands. They had not been in any engagement, and were all in good health when they marched for Aberdeen, a fortnight before.

“And are they all in their duty, my Lord?”

“You remind me, friend, that I ought to have put that before my account of their health and safety. They are in their duty, being proof, so far, against both threat and seduction from the rebels.”

“Thus far?”

“Why, yes; I used those words because their loyalty to the king is likely to be tried to the utmost at the present time. The king’s cause is in adversity, we will hope only for a short time. The rebels have won a battle at Falkirk, and dispersed the king’s troops; and this gentleman, the Earl of Loudon,” pointing to the one who was standing by the fire, “and I have had to run away from my house at Culloden, and throw ourselves on the hospitality of Sir Alexander Macdonald.”

“And what will become of your house, my lord?”

“I have thrown my house and fortune into the cause, as you have thrown something much more important—your son. If you can wait God’s disposal cheerfully, much more should I. I cannot bestow a thought on my house.”

“Except,” said Sir Alexander, “that you have nothing else to think about here; and nothing to do but to think, for this day, at least. We must remain here. So safe as it is, in comparison with any part of Skye, or even Barra, I should recommend your staying here till we have some assurance of safety elsewhere.”

“I will venture to offer something for the Lord

President to think of and to do," said the widow, coming forward with an earnestness which fixed everybody's attention at once, and made Sir Alexander stop in his walk. He was about to command silence on Annie's part, but a glance at her face showed him that this would be useless.

"Let me first be sure that I am right," said Annie. "Is the Lord President whom I speak to named Duncan Forbes? And is he a friend of Lord Carse?"

"I am Duncan Forbes: and Lord Carse is an acquaintance of mine."

"Has he ever told you that his unhappy wife is not dead, as he pretended, but living in miserable banishment on this island?"

"On this island! Nonsense!" cried Sir Alexander.

When assured by the hostess and Annie that it was so, he swore at his steward, his tenant, and himself. On first hearing of the alarm being taken by the lady's friends at Edinburgh, he had ordered her removal to St. Kilda, and had supposed it effected long ago. The troubles of the time, which left no boat or men disposable, had caused the delay; and now, between his rage at any command of his having been disregarded, and his sense of his absurdity in bringing a friend of his prisoner to her very door, he was perfectly exasperated. He muttered curses as he strode up and down.

Meantime the Lord President was quietly preparing himself for a walk. Everybody but Annie entreated him to stay till he had breakfasted, and warmed himself, Lord Loudon adding that the lady would not fly away in the course of the next hour if she had been detained so many years. It

did not escape the President's observant eye that these words struck Sir Alexander, and that he made a movement towards the door. There being a boat and rowers at hand, she might be found to have flown within the hour, if he staid to breakfast.

He approached Sir Alexander, and laid his hand on his arm, saying—

“My good friend, I advise you to yield up this affair into my hands as the first law-officer of Scotland. All chance of concealment of this lady's case has been over for some time. Measures have been taken for some months to compel you to resign the charge which you surely cannot wish to retain. . . .”

Sir Alexander broke in with curses on himself for having ever been persuaded into involving himself in such a business.

“By the desire, I presume, of Lord Carse, Lord Lovat, Mr. Forster, and others, not now particularly distinguished for their loyalty.”

“That is the cursed part of it,” muttered Sir Alexander. “It was to further their Jacobite plots that they put this vixen out of the way, because she had some secrets in her power; and they laid it all on her temper, which, they told me, caused my Lord to go in fear of his reputation and his life.”

“There was truth in that, to my knowledge,” observed the President; “and there were considerations connected with the daughters: natural considerations, though leading to unnatural cruelty.”

“Politics were at the bottom, for all that,” said the chief. “And now, as she has been my prisoner for so long, I suppose they will throw the whole

responsibility upon me. The rebel leaders hate me for my loyalty as they hate the devil. They hate me. . . .”

“As they hate Lord Loudon and myself,” interposed the President,—“which they do, I take it, much more bitterly than they ever did the devil. But, Sir Alexander, let me point out to you that your course in regard to this lady is now clear. If the rebellion succeeds, let the leaders find that you have taken out of their hands this weapon which they might otherwise use for your destruction. Let them find you acting with me in restoring the lady to her rights. If, as I anticipate, the rebellion is yet to fail, this is still your only safe course. It will afford you the best chance of impunity—which impunity, however, it is not for me to promise—for the illegality and the guilt of your past conduct to the victim. There is something in our friend’s countenance here,” he continued, turning to the widow, with a smile, “which I should like to understand. I fear I have not her good opinion, as I could wish.”

Annie told exactly what she was thinking: that all this reasoning was wrong, because wasteful of the right. Surely it was the shortest and clearest thing to say that, late as it was, it was better for Sir Alexander to begin doing right than persist in the wrong.

“I quite agree with you,” said the President: “and if people generally were like you, we should be saved most of the argumentation of our law courts—if, indeed, we should need the courts at all, or, perhaps, even any human law. Come, Sir Alexander, let me beg your company to call on Lady Carse. One needs the countenance of the

chief, who is always and everywhere welcome in his own territory, to excuse so early a visit."

Sir Alexander positively declined going. He was, in truth, afraid of the lady's tongue in the presence of a legal functionary, before whom he could neither order nor threaten violence.

It was a great relief to Annie that he did not go. She needed the opportunity of the walk to prepare the President to meet his old acquaintance, and to speak wisely to her.

Even the President, with his habitual self-possession, could not conceal his embarrassment at the change in Lady Carse. The light from the window shone upon her face; yet he glanced at the widow, as in doubt whether this could be the right person, before he made his complaints. In the midst of her agitation at the meeting, Lady Carse said to herself that the good man was losing his memory; and, indeed, it was time; for he must be above sixty. She wondered whether it was a sign that her husband might be losing his faculties too: but she feared Duncan Forbes was a good deal the older of the two.

It would have astonished those who did not know Duncan Forbes to see him now. He was a fugitive from the rebels, who might at the moment be burning his house, and impoverishing his tenants; he had been wandering in the mountains for many days, and had spent the last night upon the sea; his clothes were weather-stained, his periwig damp, and his buckles rusted; he was at the moment weary and aching with cold and hunger; he was in the presence of a lady whom he had for years supposed dead and buried; and he was under the shock of seeing a face once full of health and animation now

not only wasted, but alive with misery in every fibre: yet he sat on a bench in this island-dwelling—in his eyes a hovel—with his gold-headed cane between his knees, talking with all the courtesy, calmness, and measured cheerfulness, which Edinburgh knew so well. Nothing could be better for Lady Carse than his manner. It actually took away the sense of wonder at their meeting, and meeting thus. While he had stood at the threshold, and she heard whom she was to see, her brain had reeled, and her countenance had become such as it might well dismay him to see; but such was the influence of his composure, and of the associations which his presence revived, that she soon appeared in Annie's eyes a totally altered person. As the two sat at breakfast, Annie saw before her the gentleman and lady complete, in spite of every disguise of dress and circumstance.

At the close of the meal, Annie slipped away to her own house: but it was not long before she was sent for, at the desire, not of Lady Carse, but of the President. He wished her to hear what he had to relate. He told of Mr. Hope's exertions in Edinburgh, and of his having at length ventured upon an illegal proceeding for which only the disturbance of the times could be pleaded in excuse. He had sent out a vessel, containing a few armed men, and Mrs. Ruthven, who had undertaken to act as guide to Lady Carse's residence. It was understood that the captain had set Mrs. Ruthven ashore in Lorn, through some disagreement between them; and that the vessel had proceeded as far as Barra, when the captain was so certainly informed that the lady had been removed to the mainland that he turned back; pleading, further, that there was such evident

want of sense in Mrs. Ruthven, and such contradictory testimony between her and her husband, that he doubted whether any portion of their story was true. It was next believed that a commission of inquiry would be sent to this and other islands: but this could not take place till the public tranquillity should be in some degree restored.

“Before that, I shall be dead,” sighed Lady Carse, impatiently.

“There is no need now to wait for the commission,” said the President. “Where I am, all violations of the law must cease. Your captivity is now at an end, except in as far as you are subject to ill health, or, like myself, to winter weather and most wintry fortunes.”

“The day is come, then,” said Annie, through shining tears. “You are now delivered out of the hand of man, and have to wait only God’s pleasure.”

“What matters it,” murmured Lady Carse, “how you call my misfortunes? Here I sit, a shivering exile....”

“So far like myself,” observed the President, moving nearer the scanty fire.

“You have not been heart-sick for years under insufferable wrongs,” declared Lady Carse. “And you have not the grave open at your feet while everything you care for is beckoning to you to come away. You....”

“Pardon me, my old friend,” said he, mildly. “That is exactly my case. I am old: the grave is open at my feet; and beyond it stands she who, though early lost, has been the constant passion of my life. Perhaps my heart may have pined under the privation of her society as sensibly as yours under afflictions more strange in the eyes of the

world. But it is not wise—it does not give strength, but impair it—thus to compare human afflictions. I should prefer cheerfully encouraging each other to wait for release; I see little prospect of any release this day for us exiles: so let me see what my memory is worth in my old age—let me see what I can recal of our Janet. You know I always consider Janet my own by favouritism; and she called me grandfather the last time we met, as she used to do before she was able to spell so long a word.”

He told so much of Janet, that Lady Carse changed her opinion about his loss of memory. Again Annie stole home: and there did the President seek her, after a long conversation with her neighbour.

“I wish to know,” said he, “whether the great change that I observe in this lady is recent.”

“She is greatly changed within a few months,” replied the widow: “and I think she has sunk within a few days. I see, Sir, that you look for her release soon.”

“If the change has been rapid of late,” he replied, “it is my opinion that she is dying.”

“Is there anything that you would wish done?” asked Annie.

“What can we do? I perceive that she is in possession of what is perhaps the only aid her case admits of—a friend who can at once soothe her earthly life, and feed her heavenly one.”

Annie bowed her head, and then said—

“You would not have me conceal her state from herself, I think, Sir.”

“I would not. I believe she is aware that I think her very ill—decisively ill.”

“I hope she is. I have seen in her of late that which makes me desire for her the happy knowledge that she is going home to a place where she may find more peace than near her enemies in a city of the earth.” Fancying that the President shook his head, Annie went on—

“I would not be presumptuous, Sir, for another any more than for myself: but when a better life is permitted to begin, ever so feebly, here, surely God sends death, not to put it out, but to remove it to a safer place.”

The President smiled kindly, and walked away.

CHAPTER XIX.

FREE AT LAST !

SIR ALEXANDER and his guests remained on the island only a few days ; but during that time the President gave Lady Carse many hours of his society. Full as his mind was of public and private affairs—charged as he was with the defence of Scotland against the treason of the Pretender and his followers—grieved as he was by the heart-sorrows which attend civil war—and now a fugitive, destitute of means, and in peril of his life—he still had cheerfulness and patience to minister to Lady Carse. From his deliberate and courteous entrance, his air of leisure, his quiet humour in conversation, and his clear remembrance of small incidents relating to the lady's family and acquaintance, any one would have supposed that he had not a care in the world. For the hour, Lady Carse almost felt as if she had none. She declared herself getting quite well ; and she did strive, by a self-command and prudence such as astonished even Annie, to gain such ground as should enable her to leave the island when the President did—that is, as she and others supposed, when the spring should favour the sending an English army to contest the empire once more with the still successful Pretender.

But, in four days, there was a sudden break-up. A faithful boatman of Sir Alexander's came over

from Skye to give warning of danger. There were no three men in Scotland so hated by the rebels as the three gentlemen now on the island; and no expense or pains were to be spared in capturing them. They must not remain, from any mere hope of secrecy, in a place which contained only women and children. They must go where they could not only hide, but be guarded by fighting men. It was decided to be off that very moment. The President desired one half-hour, that he might see Lady Carse, and assure her of his care and protection, and of release, as soon as he could command the means. He entered as deliberately as usual, and merely looked at his watch and said that he had ten minutes, and no more.

“You must not go,” said she. “We cannot spare you. O! you need not fear any danger. We have admirable hiding-places in our rock; where, to my knowledge, you can have good fires, and a soft bed of warm sand. You are better here. You must not go.”

Of course, the President said he must, and civilly stopped the remonstrance. Then she declared, with a forced quietness,

“If you will go, I must go with you. Do not say a word against it. I have your promise, and I will hold you to it. O yes, I am fit to go—fitter than to stay. If I stay, I shall die this night. If I go, I shall live to keep a certain promise of mine—to go and see my Lord Lovat’s head fall. I will not detain you; we have five minutes of your ten yet. I will be across the threshold before your ten minutes are up. Helsa! Helsa, come with me.”

“What is to be done?” asked the President of Annie. “You knowher best. What if I compel her to stay? Would there be danger?”

“I think she would probably die to-night, as she says. If she could convince herself of her weakness, that would be best. She cannot walk to the shore. She cannot sit in an open boat in winter weather.”

“You are right. I will let her try. She may endure conviction by such means.”

“I will go with you to help her home.”

“That is well: but you are feeble yourself.”

“I am, Sir; but I must try what I can do.”

Lady Carse was over the threshold within the ten minutes, followed by Helsa with a bundle of clothes. She cast a glance of fiery triumph back at the dwelling, and round the whole desolate scene. For a few steps she walked firmly: then she silently accepted the President's arm. Further on, she was glad to have Helsa's on the other side.

“Let me advise you to return,” said the President, pausing when the descent became steeper. “By recruiting here till the spring, you. . . .”

“I will recruit elsewhere, thank you. When I once get into the boat I shall do very well. It is only this steep descent, and the treacherous footing. . . .”

She could not speak further. All her strength was required to keep herself from falling between her two supporters.

“You will not do better in the boat. You mistake your condition,” said the President. “Plainly—my conviction is, that if you proceed you will die.”

“ I shall not. I will not. If I stay, I shall not see another day. If I go, I may live to seventy. You do not know me, my lord. You are not entitled to speak of the power of my will.”

The President and the widow exchanged glances, and no further opposition was offered.

“ We may as well spare your strength, however,” said the President. “ The boatmen shall carry you—I will call them. O! I see. You are afraid I should give you the slip. But you may release my skirts. Your servants will do us the favour to go forward and send us help.”

The boatmen looked gloomy about conveying two women—one of them evidently very ill: and Sir Alexander would have refused in any other case whatever. But he had vowed to interfere no more in Lady Carse’s affairs, but to consider her wholly the President’s charge.

“ I see your opinion in your face,” said the President to him; “ and I entirely agree with you. But she is just about to die, at all events; and if it is an indulgence to her to die in the exercise of a freedom from which she has been debarred so long, I am not disposed to deny it to her. I assume the responsibility.”

“ My doubt is about the men,” observed Sir Alexander. “ But I will do what I can.”

He did what he could by showing an interest in the embarkation of the lady. He laid the cloaks and plaids for her in the bottom of the boat, and spoke cheerfully to her—almost jokingly—of the uncertainty of their destination. He lifted her in himself, and placed Helsa beside her: and then his men dared not show further unwillingness, but by silence.

Lady Carse raised herself, and beckoned to Annie. Annie leaned over to her, and said,

“Dear Lady Carse, you look very pale. It is not too late to say you will come home with me.”

Lady Carse tried to laugh; but it was no laugh, but a convulsion. She struggled to say,

“I shall do very well presently—when I feel I am free. It is only the last prison airs that poison me. If we never meet again....”

“We shall not meet in life, Lady Carse. I shall pray for you.”

“I know you will. And I....I wished to say....but I cannot....”

“I know what you would say. Lie down and rest. God be with you!”

All appeared calm and right on board the boat, as long as Annie could watch its course in the harbour. When it disappeared behind a headland she returned home to look for it again. She saw it soon, and for some time, for it coasted the island to the northernmost point, for the chance of being unseen to the last possible moment. It was evidently proceeding steadily on its course; and Annie hoped that the sense of freedom might be acting as a restorative for the hour to the dying woman. Those on board hoped the same; for the lady, when she had covered her face with a handkerchief, lay very still.

“She looks comfortable,” whispered the President to Sir Alexander. “Can you suggest anything more that we can do?”

“Better let her sleep while she can, my Lord. She appears comfortable at present.”

Three more hours passed without anything being observable in Lady Carse but such slight move-

ments now and then as showed that she was not asleep. She then drew the handkerchief from her face, and looked up at Helsa, who exclaimed at the change in the countenance. The President bent over her, and caught her words—

“It is not your fault—but I am dying. But I am sure I should have died on land, and before this. And I have escaped! Tell my husband so.”

“I will. Shall I raise you?”

“No; take no notice. I cannot bear to be pitied. I will not be pitied; as this was my own act. But it is hard....”

“It is hard: but you have only to pass one other threshold courageously, and then you are free indeed. Man cannot harm you there.”

“But, to-day, of all seasons....!”

“It is hard: but you have done with captivity. No more captivity! My dear Lady Carse, what remains! What is it you would have? You would not wish for vengeance! No! it is pain!—you are in pain. Shall I raise you?”

“No, no: never mind the pain! But I did hope to see my husband again.”

“To forgive him. You mean, to forgive him?”

“No: I meant....”

“But you mean it now? He had something to pardon in you.”

“True. But I cannot....Do not ask me.”

“Then you hope that God will. I may tell him that you hope that God will forgive him.”

“That is not my affair. Kiss my Janet for me.”

“I will; and all your children.....What? ‘Is

it growing dark?' Yes, it is, to us as well as to you. What is it that she says?" he inquired of Helsa, who had a younger and quicker ear.

"She says the widow is about lighting her lamp. Yes, my Lady; but we are too far off to see it."

"Is she wandering?" asked the President.

"No, Sir: quite sensible, I think. Did you speak, my Lady?"

"My love . . ."

"To Annie, my Lady? I will not forget."

She spoke no more. Sir Alexander contrived to keep from the knowledge of the boatmen for some hours that there was a corpse on board. When it could be concealed no longer, they forgot their fatigue in their superstition, and rowed, as for their lives, to the nearest point of land. This happened, fortunately, to be within the territories of Sir Alexander Macdonald.

In the early dawn the boat touched at Vaternish Point, and there landed the body, which, with Helsa for its attendant, was committed by Sir Alexander to a clansman who was to summon a distant minister, and see the remains interred in the church at Trunban, where they now lie.

When the President returned to his estate at Culloden, in the ensuing spring, on the final overthrow of the Jacobite cause, his first use of the re-established post was to write to Lord Carse, in London, tidings of his wife's death, promising all particulars if he found that his letter reached its destination in safety. The reply he received was this:—

"I most heartily thank you, my dear friend, for the notice you have given me of the death of *that*

person. It would be a ridiculous untruth to pretend grief for it; but as it brings to my mind a train of various things for many years back, it gives me concern. Her retaining wit and facetiousness to the last surprises me. These qualities none found in her, no more than common sense or good nature, before she went to those parts; and of the reverse of all which if she had not been irrecoverably possessed, in an extraordinary and insufferable degree, after many years' fruitless endeavours to reclaim her, she had never seen those parts. I long for the particulars of her death, which, you are pleased to tell me, I am to have by next post."

"Her's was a singular death, at last," observed Lord Carse, when he put the President's second letter into the hands of his sister. "I almost wonder that they did not slip the body overboard, rather than expose themselves to danger for the sake of giving Christian burial to such a person."

"Dust to dust," said Lady Rachel, thoughtfully. "Those were the words said over her. I am glad it was so, rather than that one more was added to the tossing billows. For what was she but a billow, driven by the winds and tossed?"

When, some few years after, the steward approached the island on an autumn night, in honour of Rollo's invitation to attend the funeral of the widow Fleming, his eye unconsciously sought the guiding light on the hill side.

"Ah!" said he, recollecting himself, "it is gone, and we shall see it no more. Rollo will live on the main, and this side of the island will be

deserted. Her light gone! We should almost as soon have thought of losing a star. And she herself gone! We shall miss her, as if one of our lofty old rocks had crumbled down into the sea. She was truly, though one would not have dared to tell her so, an anchorage to people feebler than herself. She had a faith which made her spirit, tender as it was, as firm as any rock."

THE END.

NOTICE.

It is scarcely necessary to explain that in this tale free use has been made of the history of Lady Grange, whose name and adventures are probably familiar to many of my readers.

FEATS ON THE FIORD

A TALE OF NORWAY,

BY

HARRIET MARTINEAU.

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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER	Page
I. Erlingsen's 'At Home'	9
II. Oddo's Walk	34
III. Olaf and his News	47
IV. Roving here and roving there	64
V. The Water Sprites' Doings	75
VI. Spring	89
VII. Vogel Islet	106
VIII. A Summer Apartment	113
IX. Hund's Report	126
X. Seeking the Uplands	140
XI. Dairy-maids' Talk	155
XII. Peder Abroad	162
XIII. Plot and Counterplot	178
XIV. Midnight	192
XV. Mountain Fare	203
XVI. Old Tales and better Tidings	214
XVII. The Watch on the Hill	222
XVIII. To Church	229

NOTICE FROM THE PUBLISHERS.

‘FEATS ON THE FIORD,’ which the Publishers have received permission from Miss Martineau to introduce into this Series, forms one of four Volumes, bearing the general title of ‘The Playfellow.’ Although written for young persons, this volume is characterized as a book that “will be read with delight through every generation in a house.” (*Quarterly Review*, June, 1844.) This volume is especially introduced here in the hope that it may form one amongst other Tales describing Life in foreign Lands. It is not intended by the present publication to separate this book from the Series of ‘The Playfellow,’ with the other volumes of which it will continue to be sold in the original form and larger type; nor will the other volumes of that series be included in ‘KNIGHT’S WEEKLY VOLUME.’



FEATS ON THE FIORD.

CHAPTER I.

ERLINGSSEN'S 'AT HOME.'

EVERY one who has looked at the map of Norway must have been struck with the singular character of its coast. On the map it looks so jagged, such a strange mixture of land and sea, that it appears as if there must be a perpetual struggle between the two,—the sea striving to inundate the land, and the land pushing itself out into the sea, till it ends in their dividing the region between them. On the spot, however, this coast is very sublime. The long straggling promontories are mountainous, towering ridges of rock, springing up in precipices from the water; while the bays between them, instead of being rounded with shelving sandy shores, on which the sea tumbles its waves, as in bays of our coast, are, in fact, long narrow valleys, filled with sea, instead of being laid out in fields and meadows. The high rocky banks shelter these deep bays (called fiords) from almost every wind; so that their waters are usually as still as those of a lake. For days and weeks toge-

ther, they reflect each separate tree-top of the pine-forests which clothe the mountain sides, the mirror being broken only by the leap of some sportive fish, or the oars of the boatman as he goes to inspect the sea-fowl from islet to islet of the fiord, or carries out his nets or his rod to catch the sea-trout or char, or cod, or herrings, which abound, in their seasons, on the coast of Norway.

It is difficult to say whether these fiords are the most beautiful in summer or in winter. In summer, they glitter with golden sunshine; and purple and green shadows from the mountain and forest lie on them; and these may be more lovely than the faint light of the winter noons of those latitudes, and the snowy pictures of frozen peaks which then show themselves on the surface: but before the day is half over, out come the stars,—the glorious stars which shine like nothing that we have ever seen. There, the planets cast a faint shadow, as the young moon does with us; and these planets and the constellations of the sky, as they silently glide over from peak to peak of these rocky passes, are imaged on the waters so clearly that the fisherman, as he unmoors his boat for his evening task, feels as if he were about to shoot forth his vessel into another heaven, and to cleave his way among the stars.

Still as everything is to the eye, sometimes for a hundred miles together along these deep sea-valleys, there is rarely silence. The ear is kept awake by a thousand voices. In the summer, there are cataracts leaping from ledge to ledge of the rocks; and there is the bleating of the kids that browse there, and the flap of the great eagle's wings, as it dashes abroad from its eyrie, and the cries of whole clouds

of sea-birds which inhabit the islets ; and all these sounds are mingled and multiplied by the strong echoes, till they become a din as loud as that of a city. Even at night, when the flocks are in the fold, and the birds at roost, and the echoes themselves seem to be asleep, there is occasionally a sweet music heard, too soft for even the listening ear to catch by day. Every breath of summer wind that steals through the pine-forests wakes this music as it goes. The stiff spiny leaves of the fir and pine vibrate with the breeze, like the strings of a musical instrument, so that every breath of the night-wind, in a Norwegian forest, wakens a myriad of tiny harps ; and this gentle and mournful music may be heard in gushes the whole night through. This music, of course, ceases when each tree becomes laden with snow ; but yet there is sound, in the midst of the longest winter night. There is the rumble of some avalanche, as, after a drifting storm, a mass of snow too heavy to keep its place slides and tumbles from the mountain peak. There is also, now and then, a loud crack of the ice in the nearest glacier ; and, as many declare, there is a crackling to be heard by those who listen when the northern lights are shooting and blazing across the sky. Nor is this all. Wherever there is a nook between the rocks on the shore, where a man may build a house, and clear a field or two ;—wherever there is a platform beside the cataract where the sawyer may plant his mill, and make a path from it to join some great road, there is a human habitation, and the sounds that belong to it. Thence, in winter nights, come music and laughter, and the tread of dancers, and the hum of many voices. The Norwegians are a social and hospitable people ;

and they hold their gay meetings, in defiance of their arctic climate, through every season of the year.

On a January night, a hundred years ago, there was great merriment in the house of a farmer who had fixed his abode within the arctic circle, in Nordland, not far from the foot of Sulitelma, the highest mountain in Norway. This dwelling, with its few fields about it, was in a recess between the rocks, on the shore of the fiord, about five miles from Saltdalen, and two miles from the junction of the Salten's Elv (river) with the fiord. It was but little that Erlingsen's fields would produce, though they were sheltered from the coldest winds, and the summer sunshine was reflected from the rocks, so as to make this little farm much more productive than any near which were in a more exposed situation. A patch of rye was grown, and some beans and oats; and there was a strip of pasture, and a garden in which might be seen turnips, radishes, potatoes, lettuce and herbs, and even some fruits,—a few raspberries, and a great many cherries. There were three or four horses on the farm, five cows, and a small flock of goats. In summer, the cattle and flock were driven up the mountain, to feed on the pastures there; and during the seven months of winter, they were housed and fed on the hay grown at home, and that which was brought from the mountain, and on a food which appears strange enough to us, but of which cows in Norway are extremely fond—fish-heads boiled into a thick soup with horse-dung. At one extremity of the little beach of white sand which extended before the farmer's door was his boat-house; and on his boat he and his family de-

pended, no less than his cows, for a principal part of their winter subsistence. Except a kid or a calf now and then, no meat was killed on the farm. Cod in winter, herrings in spring, trout and salmon in summer, and salted fish in winter, always abounded. Reindeer meat was regularly purchased from the Lapps who travelled round among the settlements for orders, or drove their fattened herds from farm to farm. Besides this, there was the resource of game. Erlingsen and his housemen brought home from their sporting rambles, sometimes a young bear, sometimes wild ducks, or the noble cock-of-the-woods, as big as a turkey, or a string of snipes, or golden plovers, or ptarmigan. The eggs of sea-birds might be found in every crevice of the islets in the fiord, in the right season; and they are excellent food. Once a year, too, Erlingsen wrapped himself in furs, and drove himself in his sledge, followed by one of his housemen on another and a larger, to the great winter fair at Tronyem, where the Lapps repaired to sell their frozen reindeer meat, their skins, and few articles of manufacture, and where travelling Russian merchants came with the productions of other climates, and found eager customers in the inhabitants who thronged to this fair, to make their purchases. Here, in exchange for the salt fish, feathers, and eider-down which had been prepared by the industry of his family, Erlingsen obtained flax and wool wherewith to make clothing for the household, and those luxuries which no Norwegian thinks of going without,—corn-brandy, coffee, tobacco, sugar, and spices. Large mould candles were also sold so cheap by the Russians that it was worth while to bring them home for the use of the whole family,—

even to burn in the stables and stalls, as the supply of bears' fat was precarious, and the pine-tree was too precious, so far north, to be split up into torches, while it even fell so short occasionally, as to compel the family to burn peat, which they did not like nearly so well as pine-logs. It was Madame Erlingsen's business to calculate how much of all these foreign articles would be required for the use of her household for a whole year; and, trusting to her calculations, which were never found to be wrong, her husband came home from the winter fair heavily enough laden with good things.

Nor was it only what was required for his own every-day household that he brought. The quantity of provisions, especially corn-brandy, tobacco, coffee, and sugar, consumed in hospitality in Norway, is almost incredible; and, retired as the Erlingsens might appear to dwell, they were as hospitable, according to their opportunities, as any inhabitant of Bergen or Christiania. They gave feasts at Christmas, and on every occasion that they could devise. The occasion, on the particular January day mentioned above, was the betrothment of one of the house-maidens to a young farm-servant of the establishment. I do not mean that this festival was any thing like a marriage. It was merely an engagement to be married; but this engagement is a much more formal and public affair in Norway (and indeed wherever the people belong to the Lutheran church) than with us. According to the rites of the Lutheran church, there are two ceremonies,—one when a couple become engaged, and another when they are married. In Norway, this betrothment gives the couple a certain dignity beyond that of the unengaged, and

more liberty of companionship, together with certain rights in law. This makes up to them for being obliged to wait so long as they often must before they can marry. In a country, scattered over with farmers, like Norway, where there are few money transactions, because people provide for their own wants on their own little estates, servants do not shift their places, and go from master to master, as with us. A young man and woman have to wait long,—probably till some houseman dies or removes, before they can settle; and then they are settled for life,—provided for till death, if they choose to be commonly industrious and honest. The story of this betrothment at Erlingsen's will explain what I have just said.

As Madame Erlingsen had two daughters growing up, and they were no less active than the girls of a Norwegian household usually are, she had occasion for only two maidens to assist in the business of the dwelling and the dairy.

Of these two, the younger, Erica, was the maiden betrothed to-day. No one perhaps rejoiced so much at the event as her mistress, both for Erica's sake, and on account of her own two young daughters. Erica was not the best companion for them; and the servants of a Norwegian farmer are necessarily the companions of the daughters of the house. There was nothing wrong in Erica's conduct or temper towards the family. She had, when confirmed,* borne so high a character that

* The rite of confirmation is thought much more of in Norway than with us. The preparation for it is longer and more strict; and the destiny of young people for life depends much on how they pass through it. A person who has not been confirmed is looked upon as one without a character

many places were offered her, and Madame Erlingsen had thought herself very fortunate in obtaining her services. But, since then, Erica had sustained a shock which hurt her spirits, and increased a weakness which she owed to her mother. Her mother, a widow, had brought up her child in all the superstitions of the country, some of which remain in full strength even to this day, and were then very powerful; and the poor woman's death at last confirmed the lessons of her life. She had stayed too long, one autumn day, at the Erlingsen's; and, being benighted on her return, and suddenly seized and bewildered by the cold, had wandered from the road, and was found frozen to death in a recess of the forest which it was surprising that she should have reached. Erica never believed that she did reach this spot of her own accord. Having had some fears before of the Wood-Demon having been offended by one of the family, Erica regarded this accident as a token of his vengeance. She said this when she first heard of her mother's death; and no reasonings from the zealous pastor of the district, no soothing from her mistress, could shake her persuasion. She listened with submission, wiping away her quiet tears as they discoursed; but no one could ever get her to say that she doubted whether there was a Wood

and without knowledge; while those who pass well stand high in credit; and, if they have to earn their living, are sure of good situations. In the newspapers in Norway you may see among the advertisements, "A *confirmed* shop-boy wants a place." "Wanted, a *confirmed* girl who can cook;" which means that their having been confirmed proves that they are considered respectable, and not deficient in capacity or knowledge.

Demon, or that she was not afraid of what he would do if offended.

Erlingsen and his wife always treated her superstition as a weakness; and when she was not present, they ridiculed it. Yet they saw that it had its effect on their daughters. Erica most strictly obeyed their wish that she should not talk about the spirits of the region with Orga and Frolich; but the girls found plenty of people to tell them what they could not learn from Erica. Besides what everybody knows who lives in the rural districts of Norway,—about Nipen, the spirit that is always so busy after everybody's affairs,—about the Water-sprite, an acquaintance of every one who lives beside a river or lake,—and about the Mountain-Demon, familiar to all who lived so near Sutiltelma; besides these common spirits, the girls used to hear of a multitude of others from old Peder, the blind houseman, and from all the farm-people, down to Oddo, the herd-boy. Their parents hoped that this taste of theirs might die away if once Erica, with her sad, serious face and subdued voice, were removed to a house of her own, where they would see her supported by her husband's unfearing mind, and occupied with domestic business more entirely than in her mistress's house. So Madame Erlingsen was well pleased that Erica was betrothed; and she could only have been better satisfied if she had been married at once.

For this marrying, however, the young people must wait. There was no house, or houseman's place, vacant for them at present. There was a prospect, however. The old houseman Peder, who had served Erlingsen's father and Erlingsen himself for fifty-eight years, could now no longer do

the weekly work on the farm which was his rent for his house, field, and cow. He was blind and old. His aged wife Ulla could not leave the house; and it was the most she could do to keep the dwelling in order, with occasional help from one and another. Housemen who make this sort of contract with farmers in Norway are never turned out. They have their dwelling and field for their own life and that of their wives. What they do, when disabled, is to take in a deserving young man, to do their work for the farmer, on the understanding that he succeeds to the houseman's place on the death of the old people. Peder and Ulla had made this agreement with Erica's lover, Rolf; and it was understood that his marriage with Erica should take place whenever the old people should die.

It was impossible for Erica herself to fear that Nipen was offended, at the outset of this festival day. If he had chosen to send a wind, the guests could not have come; for no human frame can endure travelling in a wind in Nordland on a January day. Happily, the air was so calm that a flake of snow, or a lock of eider-down, would have fallen straight to the ground. At two o'clock, when the short daylight was gone, the stars were shining so brightly, that the company who came by the fiord would be sure to have an easy voyage. Almost all came by the fiord, for the only road from Erlingsen's house led to so few habitations, and was so narrow, steep, and rocky, that an arrival by that way was a rare event. The path was now, however, so smooth with frozen snow, that more than one sledge attempted and performed the descent. Erlingsen and some of his servants went out to the

porch, on hearing music from the water, and stood with lighted pine-torches to receive their guests, when, approaching from behind, they heard the sound of the sleigh-bells, and found that company was arriving both by sea and land.

It was a pretty sight,—such an arrival. In front, there was the head of a boat driving up upon the white beach, and figure after figure leaping out and hastening to be welcomed in the porch; while, in the midst of the greeting, the quick and regular beat of a horse's feet was heard on the frozen ground, and the active little animal rushed into the light, shaking his mane and jingling his bells, till suddenly checked by the driver, who stood upright at the back of the sledge, while the ladies reclined, so wrapped in furs that nothing could be seen of them till they had entered the house, and issued forth from the room where they threw off their pelisses and cloaks. Glad had the visitors been, whether they came by land or water, to arrive in sight of the lighted dwelling, whose windows looked like rows of yellow stars, contrasting with the blue ones overhead; and more glad still were they to be ushered into the great room, where all was so light, so warm, so cheerful! Warm it was, to the farthest corner; and too warm near the roaring and crackling fires: for the fires were of pine-wood. Rows upon rows of candles were fastened against the walls, above the heads of the company; the floor was strewn with juniper twigs; and the spinning-wheels, the carding-boards, every token of household labour was removed, except a loom, which remained in one corner. In another corner was a welcome sight,—a platform of rough boards, two feet from the floor, and on it two stools. This

was a token that there was to be dancing ; and indeed Oddo, the herd-boy, old Peder's grandson, was seen to have his clarionet in his belt, as he ran in and out on the arrival of fresh parties.

Before four o'clock, the whole company, consisting of about forty, had arrived. They walked about the large room, sipping their strong coffee, and helping one another to the good things on the trays which were carried round,—the slices of bread and butter, with anchovies, or shreds of reindeer ham or tongue, or thin slices of salt cheese. When these trays disappeared, and the young women who had served them returned into the room, Oddo was seen to reach the platform with a hop, skip, and jump, followed by a dull-looking young man with a violin. The oldest men lighted their pipes, and sat down to talk, two or three together. Others withdrew to a smaller room, where card-tables were set out ; while the younger men selected their partners, and handed them forth for the gallopade. The dance was led by the blushing Erica, whose master was her partner. It had never occurred to her that she was not to take her usual place ; and she was greatly embarrassed ; not the less so that she knew that her mistress was immediately behind, with Rolf for her partner. Erica might, however, have led the dance in any country in Europe. All the women in Norway dance well ; being practised in it from their infancy, as an exercise for which the leisure of their long winter, and the roominess of their houses, afford scope. Every woman present danced well ; but none better than Erica.

“Very well !” “very pretty !” “very good !” observed the pastor, M. Kollsen, as he sat, with

his pipe in his mouth, looking on. M. Kollsen was a very young man; but the men in Norway smoke as invariably as the women dance. "Very pretty indeed! They only want double the number to make it as pretty a dance as any in Tron-yem."

"What would you have, sir?" asked old Peder, who sat smoking at his elbow. "Are there not eleven couple? Oddo told me there were eleven couple; and I think I counted so many pairs of feet as they passed."

"Let me see:—yes, you are right, Peder. There are eleven couples."

"And what would you have more, sir? In this young man's father's time——"

"Rolf's father's?"

"No, sir,—Erlingsen's. Ah! I forgot that Erlingsen may not seem to you, or any stranger, to be young; but Ulla and I have been used to call him so; and I fear I always shall, as I shall never see the furrows in his face. It will be always smooth and young to me. My Ulla says there is nothing to be sorry for in that, and she does not object to my thinking so of her face. But, as I was saying, in the elder Erlingsen's time we thought we did well when we set up nine couples at Yule: and since then, the Holbergs and Thores have each made out a new farm within ten miles; and we are accustomed to be rather proud of our eleven couples. Indeed I once knew it twelve, when they got me to stand up with little Henrica,—the pretty little girl whose grave lies behind, just under the rock. But I suppose there is no question but there are finer doings at Tron-yem.'

“Of course,—of course,” said the young clergyman. “But there are many youths in Tronyem that would be glad of so pretty a partner as M. Erlingsen has,—if she would not look so frightened.”

“Pretty she is,” said Peder. “As I remember her complexion, it looks as if it was made by the reflection of our snows in its own clearness. And when you do get a full look into her eyes, how like the summer sky they are,—as deep as the heavens in a midsummer noon! Did you say she looks frightened, sir?”

“Yes. When does she not? Some ghost from the grave has scared her, I suppose; or some spirit that has no grave to lie still in, perhaps. It is a great fault in her that she has so little faith. I never met with such a case. I hardly know how to conduct it. I must begin with the people about her,—abolish their superstitions,—and then there may be a chance for her. Meanwhile I have but a poor account to give to the bishop* of the religion of the district.”

“Did you say, sir, that Erica wants faith? It seems to me that I never knew any one who had so much.”

“You think so because there is no idea in this region of what faith is. A prodigious work indeed my bishop has given me to do. He himself cannot be aware what it is, till I send him my report. One might suppose that Christianity had never been heard of here, by the absurd credulity one meets with in the best houses,—the multitude of

* A hundred years ago, Nordland was included in the diocese of Tronyem.

good and evil spirits one hears of at every turn. I will blow them all to the winds presently. I will root out every superstition in a circle of twenty miles."

"You will, sir?"

"I will. Such is my duty as a Christian pastor."

"Do you suppose you can, sir?"

"Certainly. No doubt of that. What sort of pastor must he be who cannot vindicate his own religion?"

"These beliefs, sir, were among us long before you were born; and I fancy they will last till some time after you are dead. And, what is more,—I should not wonder if your bishop was to tell you the same thing, when you send him your report of us."

"I thought you had had more faith, Peder. I thought you had been a better Christian."

"However that may be," said Peder, "I have some knowledge of the people about us, having lived nearly fourscore years in the parish; and perhaps, sir, as you are young, and from a distance, you would allow me to say a word. May I?"

"O, certainly."

But while M. Kollsen gave this permission, he took his pipe from his mouth, and beat time with it upon his knee, and with his foot upon the ground, to carry off his impatience at being instructed.

"My advice would be, sir, with all respect to you," said Peder, "that you should lead the people into everything that you think true and good, and pass over quietly whatever old customs and notions you do not understand or like. I have so much belief in the religion you are to

teach as to feel sure that whatever will not agree with it will die off out of its way, if let alone. But if religion is brought in to hurt the people's feelings and notions, that religion will be the thing to suffer."

"I must judge for myself about such matters, of course," said M. Kollsen. He was meditating a change of place, to escape further lecturing about his duty, when Peder saved him the trouble of leaving his comfortable seat by rising, and moving away towards the fire. Peder's pipe was smoked out, and he was going for more tobacco to the place where tobacco was always to be found,—in a little recess above the fireplace. He felt his way carefully, that he might not interfere with the dancers, or be jostled by them; but he had not far to go. One friend begged to be sent for anything he wanted; another, with a quicker eye, brought him tobacco; and a third led him to his seat again. All looked with wonder at M. Kollsen, surprised that he, Peder's companion at the moment, young and blessed with eyesight, could let the blind old man leave his seat for such a reason. M. Kollsen whiffed away, however, quite unconscious of what everybody was thinking.

"This waltz," said Peder, when the dancers had begun again, "does not seem to go easily. There is something amiss. I think it is in the music that the fault lies. My boy's clarionet goes well enough; no fear of Oddo's being out. Pray, sir, who plays the violin at this moment?"

"A fellow who looks as if he did not like his business. He is frowning with his red brows, as if he would frown out the lights."

"His red brows! O, then it is Hund. I was

thinking it would be hard upon him, poor fellow, if he had to play to-night. Yet not so hard as if he had to dance. It is weary work dancing with the heels when the heart is too heavy to move. You may have heard, sir, for every one knows it, that Hund wanted to have young Rolf's place; and, some say, Erica herself. Is she dancing, sir, if I may ask?"

"Yes,—with Rolf. What sort of a man is Rolf,—with regard to these superstitions, I mean? Is he as foolish as Erica,—always frightened about something?"

"No, indeed. It is to be wished that Rolf was not so light as he is,—so inconsiderate about these matters. Rolf has his troubles and his faults; but they are not of that kind."

"Enough," said M. Kollsen with a voice of authority. "I rejoice to hear that he is superior to the popular delusions. As to his troubles and his faults, they may be left for me to discover, all in good time."

"With all my heart, sir. They are nobody's business but his own; and, may be, Erica's. Rolf has a good heart; and I doubt not Ulla and I shall have great comfort in him. He lives with us, sir, from this night forwards. There is no fear that he will wish us in our graves, though we stand between him and his marriage."

"That must be rather a painful consideration to you."

"Not at all, sir, at present. Ulla and I were all the happier, we think to this day, for having had four such years as these young people have before them, to know one another in, and grow suitable in notions and habits, and study to please

one another. By the time Rolf and Erica are what we were, one or both of us will be underground, and Rolf will have, I am certain, the pleasant feeling of having done his duty by us. It is all as it should be, sir; and I pray that they may live to say, at our age, what Ulla and I can say of the same season of our lives."

The pastor made no answer. He had not heard the last few words; for what Peder said of being underground had plunged him into a reverie about Peder's funeral sermon, which he should, of course, have to preach. He was pondering how he should at once do justice to Peder's virtues, and mark his own disapprobation of the countenance Peder gave to the superstitions of the region in which he lived. He must keep in view the love and respect in which the old man was held by everybody; and yet he must bear witness against the great fault above-mentioned. He composed two or three paragraphs in his imagination, which he thought would do, and then committed them to memory. He was roused from this employment by a loud laugh from the man whose funeral he was meditating, and saw that Peder was enjoying life, at present, as much as the youngest,—with a glass of punch in his hand, and a group of old men and women round him, recalling the jests of fifty years ago.

"How goes it, Rolf?" said his master, who, having done his duty in the dancing-room, was now making his way to the card-tables, in another apartment, to see how his guests there were entertained. Thinking that Rolf looked very absent, as he stood, in the pause of the dance, in silence by Erica's side, Erlingsen clapped him on the shoulder and said, "How goes it? Make your friends merry."

Rolf bowed and smiled, and his master passed on.

"How goes it?" repeated Rolf to Erica, as he looked earnestly into her face. "Is all going on well, Erica?"

"Certainly. I suppose so. Why not?" she replied. "If you see anything wrong,—anything omitted, be sure and tell me. Madame Erlingsen would be very sorry. Is there anything forgotten, Rolf?"

"I think you have forgotten what the day is: that is all. Nobody that looked at you, love, would fancy it to be your own day. You look anything but merry. Hardly a smile from you to-night! And that is a great omission."

"O, Rolf, there is something so much better than merriment!"

"Yes, love; but where is it? not in your heart to-night, Erica."

"Yes, indeed, Rolf."

"You look as dull,—as sad,—you and Hund, as if ——"

"Hund!" repeated Erica, glancing around the room for Hund, and not seeing him till her lover reminded her that Hund was the musician. "Hund does seem dull enough, to be sure," said she, smiling; "I hope I do not often look like that."

"I am more sorry for him than you are, I see," said Rolf, brightening when he found how entirely Hund had been absent from her thoughts. "I am more sorry for Hund than you are: and with good reason, for I know what the happiness is that he has missed, poor fellow! But yet I think you might feel a little more for him. It would show that you know how to value love."

"Indeed I am very sorry for him; but more for

his disappointment about the house than any other. To-day once over, he will soon fix his love on somebody else. Perhaps we shall be dancing on his betrothment-day before the year is out."

"Then I hope his girl will look merrier than you do to-night," muttered Rolf, with a sigh. "O Erica! I wish you would trust me. I could take care of you, and make you quite happy, if you would only believe it. Ah! I know what that look means. I know you love me, and all that; but you are always tormenting yourself——"

"I think I know one who is cleverer still at tormenting himself," said Erica, with a smile. "Come, Rolf, no more tormenting of ourselves or one another! No more of that after to-day! What is to-day worth, if it is not to put an end to all doubts of one another?"

"But where is the use of that, if you still will not believe that I can keep off all trouble from you—that nothing in the universe shall touch you to your hurt, while——"

"O, hush! hush!" said Erica, turning pale and red at the presumption of this speech. "See, they are waiting for us. One more round before supper."

And in the whirl of the waltz she tried to forget the last words Rolf had spoken; but they rang in her ears: and before her eyes were images of Nipen overhearing this defiance,—and the Water-sprite planning vengeance in its palace under the ice,—and the Mountain-Demon laughing in scorn, till the echoes shouted again,—and the Wood-Demon waiting only for summer to see how he could beguile the rash lover. Erica finished her dance; but when the company and the men of the

household were seated at the supper-table, and she had to help her mistress and the young ladies to wait upon them, she trembled so that she could scarcely stand. It was so very wrong of Rolf to be always defying the spirits!

Long was the supper, and hearty was the mirth round the table. People in Norway have universally a hearty appetite,—such an appetite as we English have no idea of. Whether it is owing to the sharp climate, or to the active life led by all,—whatever may be the cause, such is the fact. This night, piles of fish disappeared first; and then joint after joint of reindeer venison. The fine game of the country was handed round, cut up; and little but the bones was left of a score of birds. Then there were preserved fruits, and berries eaten with thick cream;—almost every dish that could be thought of made of the rich cream of the north. Erica recovered herself as the great business went on; and while her proud lover watched her, forgetting his supper, he thought to himself that no one of the fair attendants trod so lightly as Erica,—no one carved so neatly,—no one handed the dishes so gracefully, or was so quick at seeing to whom the most respect and attention were owing. Perhaps this last thought was suggested by Rolf's perceiving that, either by her own hand or another's, the hottest dishes and the nicest bits were found, all supper-time, close to his elbow. Madame Erlingsen, he decided, with all her experience, did not do the duties of the table so well; and the young ladies, kind and good-tempered as they were, would never, by any experience, become so graceful as Erica.

At last appeared the final dish of the long feast,

—the sweet cake, with which dinner and supper in Norway usually conclude. While this was sliced and handed round, Rolf observed that Erica looked anxiously towards him. He took no notice, hoping that she would come and speak to him, and that he should thus be the gainer of a few of her sweet words. She did come, and just said,

“The cake and ale are here, Rolf. Will you carry them?”

“O, the treat for old Nipen. Yes, I will carry them,” replied Rolf, rising from his seat.

It is the custom in the country regions of Norway to give the spirit Nipen a share at festival times. His Christmas cake is richer than that prepared for the guests; and, before the feast is finished, it is laid in some place out of doors, where, as might be expected, it is never to be found in the morning. Everybody knew therefore why Rolf rose from his seat, though some were too far off to hear him say that he would carry out the treat for old Nipen.

“Now, pray do not speak so,—do not call him those names,” said Erica, anxiously. “It is quite as easy to speak so as not to offend him. Pray, Rolf, to please me, do speak respectfully. And promise me to play no tricks, but just set the things down, and come straight in, and do not look behind you. Promise me, Rolf.”

Rolf did promise, but he was stopped by two voices, calling upon him. Oddo, the herd-boy, came running to claim the office of carrying out Nipen's cake; and M. Kollsen, from his seat, declared that he could not countenance any superstitious observances,—would not indeed permit any so gross as this in his presence. He requested that

the company might have the benefit of the cake, and made a speech in ridicule of all spirits and fairies, so very bold and contemptuous that all present who had to go home that night looked in consternation at their host. If such language as M. Kollsen's were allowed, they looked for nothing less than to have their way beset by offended spirits; so that Erlingsen might hear in the morning of some being frozen, some being lost in the fiord, and others tumbled from precipices. M. Erlingsen made haste to speak. He did not use any scruples with the young clergyman. He told him that every one present would be happy at all times to hear him speak on the matters belonging to his office. He had discharged his office in the morning, in betrothing Rolf and Erica; he was now resting from his business, as a guest at that table; and he would, of course, allow that the direction of the festivity rested with the host and hostess, whose desire it was that every thing should be done which was agreeable to the feelings and habits of the greater number of the guests.

It was settled in a moment that Nipen should have his cake; which so shocked and annoyed M. Kollsen that he declared he would not remain to sanction anything so impious, and requested that his boatmen might be called from their suppers, and desired to have his boat ready immediately. No entreaties would soften him: go he would.

It appeared, however, that he could not go. Not a man would row him, after what he had just said of Nipen. All were sure that a gust would blow the boat over, the minute she was out of reach of land; or that a rock would spring up in deep water, where no rock was before; or that some

strong hand would grasp the boat from below, and draw it down under the waters. A shudder went round as these things were prophesied; and, of course, M. Kollsen's return home that night was out of the question, unless he would row himself. At first he declared he should do this; but he was so earnestly entreated to attempt nothing so rash, that he yielded the point, with a supercilious air which perhaps concealed more satisfaction than he chose to avow to himself. He insisted on retiring immediately, however, and was shown to his chamber at once, by Erlingsen himself, who found, on his return, that the company were the better for the pastor's absence, though unable to recover the mirth which he had put to flight. Erica had been shedding a few tears, in spite of strong efforts to restrain them. Here was a bad omen already,—on the very day of her betrothment; and she saw that Hund thought so; for there was a gloomy satisfaction in his eye, as he sat silently watching all that passed.

She could not help being glad that Oddo renewed his request to be allowed to carry out Nipen's cake and ale. She eagerly put the ale-can into his hand, and the cake under his arm; and Oddo was going out, when his blind grandfather, hearing that he was to be the messenger, observed that he should be better pleased if it were somebody else; for Oddo, though a good boy, was inquisitive, and apt to get into mischief by looking too closely into everything, having never a thought of fear. Everybody knew this to be true; though Oddo himself declared that he was as frightened as anybody sometimes. Moreover, he asked what there was to pry into, on the present

occasion, in the middle of the night ; and appealed to the company whether Nipen was not best pleased to be served by the youngest of a party. This was allowed ; and he was permitted to go, when Peder's consent was obtained, his mistress going to the door with him, and seeing him off, putting him in mind that the dancing could not begin again till he returned to take up his clarionet.

CHAPTER II.

ODDO'S WALK.

THE place where Nipen liked to find his offerings was at the end of the barn, below the gallery which ran round the outside of the building. There, in the summer, lay a plot of green grass ; and, in the winter, a sheet of pure frozen snow. Thither Oddo shuffled on, over the slippery surface of the yard, and across the paddock, along the lane made by the snow-plough between high banks of snow ; and he took prodigious pains, between one slip and another, not to spill the ale. He looked more like a prowling cub than a boy, wrapped as he was in his wolf-skin coat, and his fox-skin cap doubled down over his ears.

As may be supposed from Oddo's declaring that he was sometimes frightened, he was a brave boy. A cowardly boy would not have said it. A cowardly boy would not have offered to go at all. A cowardly boy would, if he had been sent, have wished that the house-door might be left open, that he might see the cheerful yellow light from within : whereas Oddo begged his mistress to shut the door, that his grandfather might not be made to feel his rheumatism by any draught, as he sat at table. A cowardly boy would have run as fast as he could perhaps slipping or falling, and spilling the ale ; and when his errand was done, he would have fled

home, without looking behind him, fancying everything he saw and heard a spirit, or a wild beast. Oddo did very differently from this. As usual, he was too busy finding out how everything happened to feel afraid, as a less inquisitive boy would.

The cake steamed up in the frosty air under his nose, so warm and spicy and rich, that Oddo began to wonder what so very superior a cake could be like. He had never tasted any cake so rich as this; nor had any one in the house tasted such: for Nipen would be offended if his cake was not richer than anybody's else. Oddo wondered more and more how this would taste, till, before he had crossed the yard, he wondered no longer. He broke a piece off, and ate it; and then wondered whether Nipen would mind his cake being just a little smaller than usual. After a few steps more, the wonder was how far Nipen's charity would go; for the cake was now a great deal smaller; and Oddo next wondered whether anybody could stop eating such a cake when it was once tasted. He was surprised to see, when he came out into the starlight, at the end of the barn, how small a piece was left. He stood listening whether Nipen was coming in a gust of wind; and when he heard no breeze stirring, he looked about for a cloud where Nipen might be. There was no cloud, as far as he could see. The moon had set; but the stars were so bright as to throw a faint shadow from Oddo's form upon the snow. There was no sign of any spirit being angry at present: but Oddo thought Nipen would certainly be angry at finding so very small a piece of cake. It might be better to let the ale stand by itself; and Nipen would perhaps suppose that Madame Erlingsen's stock of

groceries had fallen short ;—at least, that it was in some way inconvenient to make the cake on the present occasion. So, putting down his can upon the snow, and holding the last fragment of the cake between his teeth, he seized a birch pole which hung down from the gallery, and by its help climbed one of the posts, and got over the rails into the gallery, whence he could watch what would happen. To remain on the very spot where Nipen was expected was a little more than he was equal to ; but he thought he could stand in the gallery, in the shadow of the broad eaves of the barn, and wait for a little while. He was so very curious to see Nipen, and to learn how it liked its ale !

There he stood in the shadow, hearing nothing but his own munching, though there was not much of that ; for, as he came near the end, he took only a little crumb at a time, to spin out the treat ; for never was anything so good ! Then he had nothing to do but listen ; but the waterfall was frozen up, and the mill stood as still as if it was not made to move. If the wheel should creak, it would be a sign that Nipen was passing.

Presently he heard something.

“ Music !” thought he : “ I never heard that it liked music ; and I don't think it can know much about music, for this is not at all sweet. There again !—that was a sort of screech. Oh, how stupid I am !” thought he again. “ So much for my head being full of Nipen ! It is only Hund, tuning his violin, because they have all done supper. They will be waiting for me. I wish this Nipen would make haste. It can't be very hungry : that is clear.”

He grew more and more impatient as the minutes passed on, and he was aware that he was wanted in the house. Once or twice he walked slowly away, looking behind him, and then turned again, unwilling to miss this opportunity of seeing Nipen. Then he called the spirit,—actually begged it to appear. His first call was almost a whisper; but he called louder and louder, by degrees, till he was suddenly stopped by hearing an answer.

The call he heard was soft and sweet. There was nothing terrible in the sound itself; yet Oddo grasped the rail of the gallery with all his strength as he heard it. The strangest thing was, it was not a single cry; others followed it,—all soft and sweet; but Oddo thought that Nipen must have many companions, and he had not prepared himself to see more spirits than one. As usual, however, his curiosity grew more intense, from the little he had heard; and he presently called again. Again he was answered, by four or five voices in succession.

“Was ever anybody so stupid!” cried the boy, now stamping with vexation. “It is the echo, after all! As if there was not always an echo here, opposite the rock! It is not Nipen at all. I will just wait another minute, however.”

He leaned in silence on his folded arms; and had not so waited for many seconds before he saw something moving on the snow at a little distance. It came nearer and nearer, and at last quite up to the can of ale.

“I am glad I stayed,” thought Oddo. “Now I can say I have seen Nipen. It is much less terrible than I expected. Grandfather told me that it sometimes came like an enormous elephant

or hippopotamus ; and never smaller than a large bear. But this is no bigger than—let me see—I think it is most like a fox. I should like to make it speak to me. They would think so much of me at home, if I had talked with Nipen.”

So he began gently,

“Is that Nipen?”

The thing moved its bushy tail, but did not answer.

“There is no cake for you to-night, Nipen. I hope the ale will do. Is the ale good, Nipen?”

Off went the dark creature, without a word, as quick as it could go.

“Is it offended?” thought Oddo : “or is it really what it looks like,—a fox? If it does not come back, I will go down presently, and see whether it has drunk the ale. If not, I shall think it is only a fox.”

He presently let himself down to the ground by the way he had come up, and eagerly laid hold of the ale-can. It would not stir. It was as fast on the ground as if it was enchanted, which Oddo did not doubt was the case ; and he started back, with more fear than he had yet had. The cold he felt on this exposed spot soon reminded him, however, that the can was probably frozen to the snow,—which it might well be after being brought warm from the fire-side. It was so. The vessel had sunk an inch into the snow, and was there fixed by the frost.

None of the ale seemed to have been drunk ; and so cold was Oddo by this time, that he longed for a sup of it. He took first a sup, and then a draught ; and then he remembered that the rest would be entirely spoiled by the frost if it stood

another hour. This would be a pity, he thought ; so he finished it, saying to himself that he did not believe Nipen would come that night.

At that very moment he heard a cry so dreadful that it shot, like sudden pain, through every nerve of his body. It was not a shout of anger : it was something between a shriek and a wail,—like what he fancied would be the cry of a person in the act of being murdered. That Nipen was here now, he could not doubt ; and at length, Oddo fled. He fled the faster, at first, for hearing the rustle of wings ; but the curiosity of the boy even now got the better of his terror, and he looked up at the barn where the wings were rustling. There he saw in the starlight the glitter of two enormous round eyes, shining down upon him from the ridge of the roof. But it struck him at once that he had seen those eyes before. He checked his speed, stopped, went back a little, sprang up once more into the gallery, hissed, waved his cap, and clapped his hands, till the echoes were all awake again ; and, as he had hoped, the great white owl spread its wings, sprang off from the ridge, and sailed away over the fiord.

Oddo tossed up his cap, cold as the night was, so delighted was he to have scared away the bird which had, for a moment, scared him. He hushed his mirth, however, when he perceived that lights were wandering in the yard, and that there were voices approaching. He saw that the household were alarmed about him, and were coming forth to search for him. Curious to see what they would do, Oddo crouched down in the darkest corner of the gallery to watch and listen.

First came Rolf and his master, carrying torches,

with which they lighted up the whole expanse of snow as they came. They looked round them, without any fear, and Oddo heard Rolf say—

“If it were not for that cry, sir, I should think nothing of it. But my fear is that some beast has got him.”

“Search first the place where the cake and ale ought to be,” said Erlingsen. “Till I see blood, I shall hope the best.”

“You will not see that,” said Hund, who followed; his gloomy countenance, now distorted by fear, looking ghastly in the yellow light of the torch he carried. “You will see no blood. Nipen does not draw blood.”

“Never tell me that any one that was not wounded and torn could send out such a cry as that,” said Rolf. “Some wild brute seized him, no doubt, at the very moment that Erica and I were standing at the door listening.”

Oddo repented of his prank when he saw, in the flickering light behind the crowd of guests, who seemed to hang together like a bunch of grapes, the figures of his grandfather and Erica. The old man had come out in the cold, for his sake; and Erica, who looked as white as the snow, had no doubt come forth because the old man wanted a guide. Oddo now wished himself out of the scrape. Sorry as he was, he could not help being amused, and keeping himself hidden a little longer, when he saw Rolf discover the round hole in the snow where the can had sunk, and heard the different opinions of the company as to what this portended. Most were convinced that his curiosity had been his destruction, as they had always prophesied. What could be clearer, by this hole, than that the

ale had stood there, and been carried off with the cake; and Oddo with it, because he chose to stay and witness what is forbidden to mortals?

“I wonder where he is now,” said a shivering youth, the gayest dancer of the evening.

“O, there is no doubt about that;—any one can tell you that,” replied the elderly and experienced M. Holberg. “He is chained upon a wind, poor fellow, like all Nipen’s victims. He will have to be shut up in a cave all the hot summer through, when it is pleasantest to be abroad; and when the frost and snow come again, he will be driven out, with a lash of Nipen’s whip, and he must go flying, wherever his wind flies, without resting, or stopping to warm himself at any fire in the country. Every winter now, when Erlingsen hears a moaning above his chimney, he may know it is poor Oddo, foolish boy!”

“Foolish boy! but one can’t help pitying him,” said another. “Chained astride upon the wind, and never to be warm again!”

Oddo had thus far kept his laughter to himself; but now he could contain himself no longer. He laughed aloud—and then louder and louder as he heard the echoes all laughing with him. The faces below too were so very ridiculous;—some of the people staring up in the air, and others at the rock where the echo came from; some having their mouths wide open,—others their eyes starting,—and all looking unlike themselves in the torchlight. His mirth was stopped by his master.

“Come down, sir,” cried Erlingsen, looking up at the gallery. “Come down this moment. We shall make you remember this night, as well per-

haps as Nipen could do. Come down, and bring my can, and the ale and the cake. The more pranks you play to-night, the more you will repent it."

Most of the company thought Erlingsen very bold to talk in this way; but he was presently justified by Oddo's appearance on the balustrade. His master seized him as he touched the ground, while the others stood aloof.

"Where is my ale-can?" said Erlingsen.

"Here, sir;" and Oddo held it up dangling by the handle.

"And the cake,—I bade you bring down the cake with you."

"So I did, sir."

And to his master's look of inquiry, the boy answered by pointing down his throat with one finger, and laying the other hand upon his stomach. "It is all here, sir."

"And the ale in the same place?"

Oddo bowed, and Erlingsen turned away without speaking. He could not have spoken without laughing.

"Bring this gentleman home," said Erlingsen presently to Rolf; "and do not let him out of your hands. Let no one ask him any questions till he is in the house." Rolf grasped the boy's arm, and Erlingsen went forward to relieve Peder, though it was not very clear to him at the moment whether such a grandchild was better safe or missing. The old man made no such question; but hastened back to the house, with many expressions of thanksgiving.

As the search-party crowded in among the women, and pushed all before them into the large

warm room, M. Kollsen was seen standing on the stair-head, wrapped in the bear-skin coverlid.

"Is the boy there?" he inquired.

Oddo showed himself.

"How much have you seen of Nipen, hey?"

"Nobody ever had a better sight of it, sir. It was as plain as I see you now, and no farther off."

"Nonsense,—it is a lie," said M. Kollsen. "Do not believe a word he says," advised the pastor, speaking to the listeners. "There is the folly of giving such an opportunity to a child of making himself important. If he had had his share of the cake, with the rest of us at table, he would have taken it quietly, and been thankful. As it is, it will be harder work than ever to drive out these wicked superstitions.—Go, get along!" he cried to Oddo; "I do not want to hear a word you have got to say."

Oddo bowed, and proceeded to the great room, where he took up his clarinet, as if it was a matter of course that the dancing was to begin again immediately. He blew upon his fingers, however, observing that they were too stiff with cold to do their duty well. And when he turned towards the fire, every one made way for him, in a very different manner from what they would have dreamed of three hours before. Oddo had his curiosity gratified as to how they would regard one who was believed to have seen something supernatural.

Erlingsen saw that something must be done on the spot, to clear up the affair. If his guests went home without having heard the mysteries of the night explained, the whole country would presently be filled with wild and superstitious stories. He requested Peder to examine the boy, as Oddo stood

more in awe of his grandfather than of any one else; and also because Peder was known to be so firm a believer in Nipen, that his judgment would be more readily received than that of an unbeliever. When seriously questioned, Oddo had no wish to say anything but the truth; and he admitted the whole,—that he had eaten the entire cake, drunk all the ale, seen a fox and an owl, and heard the echoes, in answer to himself. As he finished his story, Hund, who was perhaps the most eager listener of all, leaped thrice upon the floor, snapping his fingers, as if in a passion of delight. He met Erlingsen's eye, full of severity, and was quiet; but his countenance still glowed with exultation.

The rest of the company were greatly shocked at these daring insults to Nipen: and none more so than Peder. The old man's features worked with emotion, as he said in a low voice that he should be very thankful if all the mischief that might follow upon this adventure might be borne by the kin of him who had provoked it. If it should fall upon those who were innocent, never surely had boy been so miserable as his poor lad would then be. Oddo's eyes filled with tears, as he heard this; and he looked up at his master and mistress, as if to ask whether they had no word of comfort to say.

“Neighbour,” said Madame Erlingsen to Peder, “is there any one here who does not believe that God is over all, and that he protects the innocent?”

“Is there any one who does not feel,” added Erlingsen, “that the innocent should be gay, safe as they are in the good-will of God and man? Come, neighbours,—to your dancing again! You have lost too much time already. Now Oddo, play your best,—and you, Hund.”

“I hope,” said Oddo, “that, if any mischief is to come, it will fall upon me. We’ll see how I shall bear it.”

“Mischief enough will befall you, boy,—never doubt it,” said his master, “as long as you trifle with people’s feelings as you have done to-night. Go. Make up for it, all you can.”

The dancing was spiritless, and there was little more it. The mirth of the meeting was destroyed. The party broke up at three, instead of five or six; and it might have been earlier still, but for the unwillingness of every family present to be the first to go upon the lake, or to try the road. At last, all understood one another’s feelings by their own; and the whole company departed at once in two bands, one by water and the other by land. Those who went in sleighs took care that a heavy stone was fastened by a rope to the back of each carriage, that its bobbing and dancing on the road might keep off the wolves. Glad would they have been of any contrivance by which they might as certainly distance Nipen. Rolf then took a parting kiss from Erica in the porch, pushed Oddo on before, and followed with Peder. Erica watched them quite to the door of their own house, and then came in, and busied herself in making a clearance of some of the confusion which the guests had left behind.

“Oddo could not get a word from you, Erica,” observed her mistress; “not even a look in answer to his ‘good night.’”

“I could not, madam,” answered Erica, tears and sobs breaking forth. “When I think of it all, I am so shocked,—so ashamed!”

“How ashamed?”

“Nipen has been so favourable to us to-day,

madam ! not a breath of wind stirring all the morning, so that nobody was disappointed of coming ! And then to serve it in this way ! To rob it, and mock it, and brave it as we have done !—So ungrateful !—so very wrong !”

“ We are very sorry for Oddo's trick,—your master and I,” said Madame Erlingsen ; “ but we are not in the least afraid of any further harm happening. You know we do not believe that God permits his children to be at the mercy of evil or capricious spirits. Indeed, Erica, we could not love God as we should wish to love him, if we could not trust in him as a just and kind protector. Go to rest now, Erica. You have done quite enough since you left your bed. Go to rest now. Rest your heart upon Him who has blessed you exceedingly this day. Whatever others do, do not you be ungrateful to Him. Good sleep to you, Erica ! Sleep off your troubles, that Rolf may see nothing of them in the morning.”

Erica smiled ; and when Orga and Frolich saw the effect of what their mother had said, they too went to rest without trembling at every one of the noises with which a house built of wood is always resounding.

CHAPTER III.

OLAF AND HIS NEWS.

WHEN M. Kollsen appeared the next morning, the household had so much of its usual air that no stranger would have imagined how it had been occupied the day before. The large room was fresh strewn with evergreen sprigs; the breakfast-table stood at one end, where each took breakfast, standing, immediately on coming down stairs. At the bottom of the room was a busy group. The shoemaker, who travelled this way twice a-year, had appeared this morning, and was already engaged upon the skins which had been tanned on the farm, and kept in readiness for him. He was instructing Oddo in the making of the tall boots of the country; and Oddo was so eager to have a pair in which he might walk knee-deep in the snow when the frosts should be over, that he gave all his attention to the work. Peder was twisting strips of leather, thin and narrow, into whips. Rolf and Hund were silently intent upon a sort of work which the Norwegian peasant delights in,—carving wood. They spoke only to answer Peder's questions about the progress of the work. Peder loved to hear about their carving, and to feel it; for he had been remarkable for his skill in the art, as long as his sight lasted.

Erlingsen was reading the newspaper, which

must go away in the pastor's pocket. Madame was spinning; and her daughters sat busily plying their needles with Erica, in a corner of the apartment. The three were putting the last stitches to the piece of work which the pastor was also to carry away with him, as his fee for his services of yesterday. It was an eider-down coverlid, of which Rolf had procured the down, from the islets in the fiord frequented by the eider-duck, and Erica had woven the cover, and quilted it, with the assistance of her young ladies, in an elegant pattern. The other house-maiden was in the chambers, hanging out the bedding in an upper gallery to air, as she did on all days of fair weather.

The whole party rose when M. Kollsen entered the room, but presently resumed their employments, except Madame Erlingsen, who conducted the pastor to the breakfast-table, and helped him plentifully to reindeer ham, bread and butter, and corn-brandy,—the usual breakfast. M. Kollsen carried his plate, and ate, as he went round to converse with each group. First, he talked politics a little with his host, by the fire-side; in the midst of which conversation Erlingsen managed to intimate that nothing would be heard of Nipen to-day, if the subject was let alone by themselves: a hint which the clergyman was willing to take, as he supposed it meant in deference to his views. Then he complimented Madame Erlingsen on the excellence of her ham, and helped himself again; and next drew near the girls.

Erica blushed, and was thinking how she should explain that she wished his acceptance of her work, when Frolich saved her the awkwardness by saying,

“We hope you will like this coverlid, for we have made an entirely new pattern, on purpose for it. Orga, you have the pattern. Do show M. Kollsen how pretty it looks on paper.”

M. Kollsen did not know much about such things: but he admired as much as he could.

“That lily of the valley, see, is mamma’s idea; and the barberry, answering to it, is mine. That tree in the middle is all Erica’s work,—entirely; but the squirrel upon it, we never should have thought of. It was papa who put that into our heads! and it is the most original thing in the whole pattern. Erica has worked it beautifully, to be sure.”

“I think we have said quite enough about it,” observed Erica, smiling and blushing. “I hope M. Kollsen will accept it. The down is Rolf’s present.”

Rolf rose, and made his bow, and said he had had pleasure in preparing his small offering.

“And I think,” said Erlingsen, “it is pretty plain that my little girls have had pleasure in their part of the work. It is my belief that they are sorry it is so nearly done.”

M. Kollsen graciously accepted the gift,—took up the coverlid and weighed it in his hand, in order to admire its lightness, compared with its handsome size; and then bent over the carvers, to see what work was under their hands.

“A bell-collar, sir,” said Hund, showing his piece of wood. “I am making a complete set for our cows, against they go to the mountain, come summer.”

“A pulpit, sir,” explained Rolf, showing his work in his turn.

“ A pulpit ! Really ! And who is to preach in it ? ”

“ You, sir, of course, ” replied Erlingsen. “ Long before you came,—from the time the new church was begun, we meant it should have a handsome pulpit. Six of us, within a round of twenty miles, undertook the six sides ; and Rolf has great hopes of having the basement allotted to him afterwards. The best workman is to do the basement ; and I think Rolf bids fair to be the one. This is good work, sir. ”

“ Exquisite, ” said the pastor. “ I question whether our native carvers may not be found equal to any whose works we hear so much of in popish churches, in other countries. And there is no doubt of the superiority of their subjects. Look at these elegant twining flowers, and that fine brooding eagle ! How much better to copy the beautiful works of God that are before our eyes, than to make durable pictures of the popish idolatries and superstitions, which should all have been forgotten as soon as possible ! I hope that none of the impious idolatries which, I am ashamed to say, still linger among us, will find their way into the arts by which future generations will judge us. ”

The pastor stopped, on seeing that his hearers looked at one another, as if conscious. A few words, he judged, would be better than more ; and he went on to Peder, passing by Oddo without a word of notice. The party had indeed glanced consciously at each other ; for it so happened that the very prettiest piece Rolf had ever carved was a bowl on which he had shown the water-sprite's hand (and never was hand so delicate as the water-sprite's) beckoning the heron to come and fish when the river begins to flow.

When Erica heard M. Kollsen inquiring of Peder about his old wife, she started up from her work, and said she must run and prepare Ulla for the pastor's visit. Poor Ulla would think herself forgotten this morning, it was growing so late, and nobody had been over to see her.

Ulla, however, was far from having any such thoughts. There sat the old woman, propped up in bed, knitting as fast as fingers could move, and singing, with her soul in her song, though her voice was weak and unsteady. She was covered with an eider-down quilt, like the first lady in the land; but this luxury was a consequence of her being old and ill, and having friends who cared for her infirmities. There was no other luxury. Her window was glazed with thick flaky glass, through which nothing could be seen distinctly. The shelf, the table, the clothes' chest, were all of rough fir-wood; and the walls of the house were of logs, well stuffed with moss in all the crevices, to keep out the cold. There are no dwellings so warm in winter and cool in summer as well built log-houses; and this house had every thing essential to health and comfort: but there was nothing more, unless it was the green sprinkling of the floor, and the clean appearance of everything the room contained, from Ulla's cap to the wooden platters on the shelf.

"I thought you would come," said Ulla. "I knew you would come, and take my blessing on your betrothment, and my wishes that you may soon be seen with the golden crown.* I must not say that I hope to see you crowned; for we all know,—and nobody so well as I, that it is I that

* Peasant brides in Norway wear, on their wedding-day, a coronet of paste-board, covered with gilt paper.

stand between you and your crown. I often think of it, my dear——.”

“Then I wish you would not, Ulla: you know that.”

“I do know it, my dear: and I would not be for hastening God’s appointments. Let all be in his own time. And I know, by myself, how happy you may be,—you and Rolf,—while Peder and I are failing and dying. I only say that none wish for your crowning more than we.—O, Erica! you have a fine lot in having Rolf.”

“Indeed I know it, Ulla.”

“Do but look about you, dear, and see how he keeps the house. And if you were to see him give me my cup of coffee, and watch over Peder, you would consider what he is likely to be to a pretty young thing like you, when he is what he is to two worn-out old creatures like us.”

Erica did not need convincing about these things; but she liked to hear them.

“Where is he now?” asked Ulla. “I always ask where every body is, at this season; people go about staring at the snow, as if they had no eyes to lose. That is the way my husband did. Do make Rolf take care of his precious eyes, Erica. Is he abroad to-day, my dear?”

“By this time he is,” replied Erica. “I left him at work at the pulpit——.”

“Aye! trying his eyes with fine carving, as Peder did!”

“But,” continued Erica, “there was news this morning of a lodgment of logs at the top of the foss;* and they were all going except Peder, to

* Waterfall. Pine-trunks felled in the forest are drawn over the frozen snow to the banks of a river, or to the top of

slide them down the gully to the fiord. The gully is frozen so slippery, that the work will not take long. They will make a raft of the logs in the fiord; and either Rolf or Hund will carry them out to the islands when the tide ebbs."

"Will it be Rolf, do you think, or Hund, dear?"

"I wish it may be Hund. If it be Rolf, I shall go with him. O, Ulla! I cannot lose sight of him, after what happened last night. Did you hear? I do wish Oddo would grow wiser."

Ulla shook her head, and then nodded, to intimate that they would not talk of Nipen. And she began to speak of something else.

"How did Hund conduct himself yesterday? I heard my husband's account: but you know Peder could say nothing of his looks. Did you mark his countenance, dear?"

"Indeed there was no helping it,—any more than one can help watching a storm-cloud as it comes up."

"So it was dark and wrathful, was it,—that ugly face of his? Well it might be, dear;—well it might be."

"The worst was,—worse than all his dark looks together,—O, Ulla! the worst was his leap and cry of joy when he heard what Oddo had done, and that Nipen was made our enemy. He looked like an evil spirit when he fixed his eyes on me, and snapped his fingers."

Ulla shook her head mournfully, and then asked Erica to put another peat on the fire.

a waterfall, whence they may be either slid down over the ice, or left to be carried down by the floods, at the melting of the snows in the spring.

“I really should like to know,” said Erica in a low voice, when she resumed her seat on the bed,—“I am sure you can tell me if you would, what is the real truth about Hund,—what it is that weighs upon his heart.”

“I will tell you,” replied Ulla. “You are not one that will go blabbing it, so that Hund shall meet with taunts, and have his sore heart made sorer. I will tell you, my dear, though there is no one else but our mistress that I would tell: and she, no doubt, knows it already. Hund was born and reared a good way to the south,—not far from Bergen. In mid-winter, four years since, his master sent him on an errand of twenty miles, to carry some provisions to a village in the upper country. He did his errand; and, so far, all was well. The village people asked him, for charity, to carry three orphan children on his sledge some miles on the way to Bergen, and to leave them at a house he had to pass on his road, where they would be taken care of till they could be fetched from Bergen. Hund was an obliging young fellow then, and he made no objection. He took the little things, and saw that the two elder were well wrapped up from the cold. The third he took within his arms, and on his knee as he drove, clasping it warm against his breast. So those say who saw them set off; and it is confirmed by one who met the sledge on the road, and heard the children prattling to Hund, and Hund laughing merrily at their little talk. Before they had got half way, however, a pack of hungry wolves burst out upon them from a hollow to the right of the road. The brutes followed close at the back of the sledge, and ——— ”

“O, stop!” cried Erica, “I know that story. Is it possible that Hund is the man? No need to go on, Ulla.”

But Ulla thought there was always need to finish a story that she had begun; and she proceeded.

“Closer and closer the wolves pressed, and it is thought Hund saw one about to spring at his throat. It was impossible for the horse to go faster than it did, for it went like the wind; but so did the beasts. Hund snatched up one of the children behind him, and threw it over the back of the sledge; and this stopped the pack for a little. On galloped the horse; but the wolves were soon crowding round again, with the blood freezing on their muzzles. It was easier to throw the second child than the first; and Hund did it. It was harder to give up the third,—the dumb infant that nestled to his breast; but Hund was in mortal terror; and a man beside himself with terror has all the cruelty of a pack of wolves. Hund flung away the infant, and just saved himself. Nobody at home questioned him, for nobody knew about the orphans; and he did not tell. But he was unsettled, and looked wild; and his talk, whenever he did speak, night or day, was of wolves, for the three days that he remained after his return. Then there was a questioning along the road, about the orphan children; and Hund heard of it, and started off into the woods. By putting things together,—what Hund had dropped in his agony of mind, and what had been seen and heard on the road, the whole was made out, and the country rose to find Hund. He was hunted like a bear, in the forest and on the mountain; but he had got to the coast in time, and was taken in a boat, it is

thought, to Hammerfest. At any rate, he came here as from the north, and wishes to pass for a northern man."

"And does Erlingsen know all this?"

"Yes. The same person who told me told him. Erlingsen thinks he must meet with mercy; for that none need mercy so much as the weak; and Hund's act was an act of weakness."

"Weakness!" cried Erica, with disgust.

"He is a coward, my dear; and death stared him in the face."

"I have often wondered," said Erica, "where on the face of the earth that wretch was wandering: and it is Hund! And he wanted to live in this very house——," she continued, looking round the room.

"And to marry you, dear. Erlingsen would never have allowed that. But the thought has plunged the poor fellow deeper, instead of saving him, as he hoped. He now has envy and jealousy at his heart, besides the remorse which he will carry to his grave."

"And revenge?" said Erica, shuddering. "I tell you he leaped for joy that Nipen was offended. Here is some one coming," she exclaimed, starting from her seat, as a shadow flitted over the thick window pane, and a hasty knock was heard at the door.

"You are a coward, if ever there was one," said Ulla, smiling. "Hund never comes here; so you need not look so frightened. What is to be done, if you look so at dinner, or the next time you meet him? It will be the ruin of some of us. Go,—open the door, and do not keep the pastor waiting."

There was another knock before Erica could reach the door, and Frolich burst in.

“Such news!” she cried,—“You never heard such news.”

“I wish there never was any news,” exclaimed Erica, almost pettishly.

“Good or bad?” enquired Ulla.

“O, bad,—very bad,” declared Frolich, who yet looked as if she would rather have it than none. “Here is company. Olaf, the drug-merchant, is come. Father did not expect him these three weeks.”

“This is not bad news, but good,” said Ulla. “Who knows but he may bring me a cure?”

“We will all beg him to cure you, dear Ulla,” said Frolich, stroking the old woman’s white hair smooth upon her forehead. “But he tells us shocking things. There is a pirate vessel among the islands. She was seen off Soroe, some time ago; but she is much nearer to us now. There was a farm-house seen burning on Alten fiord, last week; and as the family are all gone, and nothing but ruins left, there is little doubt the pirates lit the torch that did it. And the cod has been carried off from the beach, in the few places where any has been caught yet.”

“They have not found out our fiord yet?” enquired Ulla.

“O, dear! I hope not. But they may, any day. And father says, the coast must be raised, from Hammerfest to Tronyem, and a watch set till this wicked vessel can be taken or driven away. He was going to send a running message both ways; but here is something else to be done first.”

“Another misfortune?” asked Erica, faintly.

“No: they say it is a piece of very good fortune;—at least for those who like bears’ feet for dinner-

Some body or other has lighted upon the great bear that got away in the summer, and poked her out of her den, on the fjelde. She is certainly abroad with her two last year's cubs; and their traces have been found just above, near the foss. Olaf had heard of her being roused; and Rolf and Hund have found her traces. Oddo has come running home to tell us: and father says he must get up a hunt before more snow falls, and we lose the tracks, or the family may establish themselves among us, and make away with our first calves."

"Does he expect to kill them all?"

"I tell you, we are all to grow stout on bears' feet. For my part, I like bears' feet best on the other side of Tronyem."

"You will change your mind, Miss Frolich, when you see them on the table," observed Ulla.

"That is just what father said. And he asked how I thought Erica and Stiorna would like to have a den in their neighbourhood when they got up to the mountain for the summer. O, it will be all right when the hunt is well over, and all the bears dead. Meantime, I thought they were at my heels as I crossed the yard."

"And that made you burst in as you did. Did Olaf say anything about coming to see me? Has he plenty of medicines with him?"

"O, certainly. That was the thing I came to say. He is laying out his medicines, while he warms himself; and then he is coming over, to see what he can do for your poor head. He asked about you, directly; and he is frowning over his drugs, as if he meant to let them know that they must not trifle with you."

Ulla was highly pleased, and gave her directions

very briskly about the arrangement of the room. If it had been the grandest apartment of a palace, she could not have been more particular as to where every thing should stand. When all was to her mind, she begged Erica to step over, and inform Olaf that she was ready.

When Erica opened the door, she instantly drew back, and shut it again.

“What now?” asked Frolich. “Are all the bears in the porch?”

“Olaf is there,” replied Erica, in a whisper, “talking with Hund.”

“Hund wants a cure for the heart-ache,” Frolich whispered in return; “or a charm to make some girl betroth herself to him;—a thing which no girl will do, but under a charm: for I don’t believe Stiorna would when it came to the point, though she likes to be attended to.”

When Olaf entered, and Hund walked away, Frolich ran home, and Erica stood by the window, ready to receive the travelling doctor’s opinion and directions, if he should vouchsafe any.

“So I am not the first to consult you to-day,” said Ulla. “It is rather hard that I should not have the best chance of luck, having been so long ill.”

Olaf assured her that he would hear no complaints from another till he had given her the first-fruits of his wisdom in this district of his rounds. Hund was only enquiring of him where the pirate-schooner was, having slid down from the height, as fast as his snow skaits would carry him, on hearing the news from Oddo. He was also eager to know whence these pirates came,—what nation they were of, or whether a crew gathered from many nations. Olaf had advised Hund to go

and ask the pirates themselves all that he wanted to know; for there was no one else who could satisfy him. Whereupon Hund had smiled grimly, and gone back to his work.

Erica observed that she had heard her master say that it was foolish to boast that Norway need not mind when Denmark went to war, because it would be carried on far out of sight and hearing. So far from this, Erlingsen had said, that Denmark never went to war but pirates came to ravage the coast, from the North Cape to the Naze. Was not this the case now? Denmark had gone to war; and here were the pirates come to make her poor partner suffer.

Olaf said this explained the matter; and he feared the business of the coast would suffer till a time of peace. Meanwhile, he must mind his business. When he had heard all Ulla's complaints, and ordered exactly what she wished,—large doses of camphor and corn-brandy to keep off the night-fever and daily cough, he was ready to hear whatever else Erica had to ask, for Ulla had hinted that Erica wanted advice.

“I do not mind Ulla hearing my words,” said Erica. “She knows my trouble.”

“It is of the mind,” observed Olaf, solemnly, on discovering that Erica did not desire to have her pulse felt.

“Yesterday was—— I was ——” Erica began.

“She was betrothed yesterday,” said Ulla, “to the man of her heart. Rolf is such a young man——.”

“Olaf knows Rolf,” observed Erica. “An unfortunate thing happened, at the end of the day, Olaf Nipen was insulted.” And she told the story

of Oddo's prank, and implored the doctor to say if anything could be done to avert bad consequences.

"No doubt," replied Olaf. "Look here! This will preserve you from any particular evil that you dread." And he took from the box he carried under his arm a round piece of white paper, with a hole in the middle, through which a string was to be passed, to tie the charm round the neck. Erica shook her head. Such a charm would be of no use, as she did not know under what particular shape of misfortune Nipen's displeasure would show itself. Besides, she was certain that nothing would make Rolf wear a charm; and she disdained to use any security which he might not share. Olaf could not help her in any other way; but enquired with sympathy when the next festival would take place. Then, all might be repaired by handsome treatment of Nipen. Till then, he advised Erica to wear his charm; as her lover could not be the worse for her being so far safe. Erica blushed: she knew, but did not say, that harm would be done which no charm could repair if her lover saw her trying to save herself from dangers to which he remained exposed: and she did not know what their betrothment was worth, if it did not give them the privilege of suffering together. So she put back the charm into its place in the box, and, with a sigh, rose to return to the house.

In the porch she found Oddo, eating something which caused him to make faces. Though it was in the open air, there was a strong smell of camphor, and of something else less pleasant.

"What are you doing, Oddo?" asked Erica:

the question which Oddo was asked every day of his life.

Oddo had observed Olaf's practice among his patients of the household, and perceived that, for all complaints, of body or mind, he gave the two things, camphor and assafoetida,—sometimes together, and sometimes separately; and always in corn-brandy. Oddo could not refrain from trying what these drugs were like; so he helped himself to some of each; and, as he could get no corn-brandy till dinner time, he was eating the medicines without. Such was the cause of his wry faces. If he had been any thing but a Norway boy, he would have been the invalid of the house to-day, from the quantity of rich cake he had eaten: but Oddo seemed to share the privilege, common to Norwegians, of being able to eat any thing, in any quantity, without injury. His wry faces were from no indigestion, but from the savour of assafoetida, unrelieved by brandy.

Wooden dwellings resound so much as to be inconvenient for those who have secrets to tell. In the porch of Peder's house, Oddo had heard all that passed within. It was good for him to have done so. He became more sensible of the pain he had given, and more anxious to repair it.

“Dear Erica,” said he, “I want you to do a very kind thing for me. Do get leave for me to go with Rolf after the bears. If I get one stroke at them,—if I can but wound one of them, I shall have a paw for my share; and I will lay it out for Nipen. You will, will not you?”

“It must be as Erlingsen chooses, Oddo: but I fancy you will not be allowed to go just now. The

bears will think the doctor's physic-sledge is coming through the woods, and they will be shy. Do stand a little farther off. I cannot think how it is that you are not choked."

"Suppose you go for an airing," said the doctor, who now joined them. "If you must not go in the way of the bears, there is a rein deer,——"

"O, where?" cried Oddo.

"I saw one,—all alone,—on the Salten heights. If you run that way, with the wind behind you, the deer will give you a good run;—up Sulitelma, if you like, and you will have got rid of the camphor before you come back. And be sure you bring me some Iceland moss, to pay me for what you have been helping yourself to."

When Oddo had convinced himself that Olaf really had seen a reindeer on the heights, three miles off, he said to himself that if deer do not like camphor, they are fond of salt; and he was presently at the salt-box, and then quickly on his way to the hills with his bait. He considered his chance of training home the deer much more probable than that Erlingsen and his grandfather would allow him to hunt the bears: and he doubtless judged rightly.

CHAPTER IV

ROVING HERE AND ROVING THERE.

THE establishment was now in a great hurry and bustle for an hour ; after which time, it promised to be unusually quiet.

M. Kollsen began to be anxious to be on the other side of the fiord. It was rather inconvenient ; as the two men were wanted to go in different directions, while their master took a third, to rouse the farmers for the bear-hunt. The hunters were all to arrive before night within a certain distance of the thickets where the bears were now believed to be. On calm nights, it was no great hardship to spend the dark hours in the bivouac of the country. Each party was to shelter itself under a bank of snow, or in a pit dug out of it, an enormous fire blazing in the midst, and brandy and tobacco being plentifully distributed on such occasions. Early in the morning the director of the hunt was to go his rounds, and arrange the hunters in a ring enclosing the hiding-place of the bears, so that all might be prepared, and no waste made of the few hours of daylight which the season afforded. As soon as it was light enough to see distinctly among the trees, or bushes, or holes of the rocks where the bears might be couched, they were to be driven from their retreat, and disposed of as quickly as possible. Such was the plan, well

understood in such cases throughout the country. On the present occasion, it might be expected that the peasantry would be ready at the first summons, as Olaf had told his story of the bears all along the road. Yet, the more messengers and helpers the better; and Erlingsen was rather vexed to see Hund go with alacrity to unmoor the boat, and offer officiously to row the pastor across the fiord. His daughters knew what he was thinking about; and, after a moment's consultation, Frolich asked whether she and the maid Stiorna might not be the rowers.

Nobody would have objected, if Hund had not. The girls could row, though they could not hunt bears; and the weather was fair enough: but Hund shook his head, and went on preparing the boat. His master spoke to him; but Hund was not remarkable for giving up his own way. He would only say that there would be plenty of time for both affairs, and that he could follow the hunt when he returned; and across the lake he went.

Erlingsen and Rolf presently departed, accompanied by Olaf, who was glad of an escort for a few miles, though nothing was further from his intention than going near the bears. The women and Peder were thus left behind.

They occupied themselves, to keep away anxious thoughts. One began some new nets, for the approaching fishing season; another sat in the loom, and the girls appealed to their mother, very frequently, about the beauties of a new quilting pattern they were drawing. Old Peder sang to them, too; but Peder's songs were rather melancholy, and they had not the effect of cheering the party. Hour after hour they looked for Hund. His news

of his voyage, and the sending him after his master, would be something to do and to think of; but Hund did not come. Stiorna at last let fall that she did not think he would come yet; for that he meant to catch some cod before his return. He had taken tackle with him for that purpose, she knew; and she should not wonder if he did not appear till the morning.

Every one was surprised, and Madame Erlingsen highly displeased. At the time when her husband would be wanting every strong arm that could be mustered, his servant choose to be out fishing, instead of obeying orders. The girls pronounced him a coward; and Peder observed that to a coward, as well as a sluggard, there was ever a lion in the path. Erica doubted whether this act of disobedience arose from cowardice; for there were dangers in the fiord,—for such as went out as far as the cod. She supposed Hund had heard ——

She stopped short, as a sudden flash of suspicion crossed her mind. She had seen Hund inquiring of Olaf about the pirates; and his strange obstinacy about this day's boating looked much as if he meant to learn more.

“Danger in the fiord!” repeated Orga; “O, you mean the pirates. They are far enough from our fiord, I suppose. If ever they do come, I wish they would catch Hund, and carry him off. I am sure we could spare them nothing they would be so welcome to.”

Madame Erlingsen saw that Erica was turning red and white, and resolved to ask, on the first good opportunity, what was in her mind about Hund; for no one was more disposed to distrust and watch him than the lady herself.

The first piece of amusement that occurred was the return of Oddo, who passed the windows, followed at a short distance by a wistful-looking deer, which seemed afraid to come quite up to him, but kept its branched head outstretched towards the salt which Oddo displayed, dropping a few grains from time to time. At the sight, all crowded to the windows but Frolich, who left the room on the instant. Before the animal had passed the servants' house (a separate dwelling in the yard), she appeared in the gallery which ran round the outside of it, and showed to Oddo a cord which she held. He nodded, and threw down some salt on the snow immediately below where she stood. The rein-deer stooped its head, instead of looking out for enemies above, and thus gave Frolich a good opportunity to throw her cord over its antlers. She had previously wound one end round the balustrade of the gallery, so that she had not with her single strength to sustain the animal's struggles.

The poor animal struggled violently when it found its head no longer at liberty, and, by throwing out its legs, gave Oddo an opportunity to catch and fasten it by the hind leg, so as to decide its fate completely. It could now only start from side to side, and threaten with its head when the household gathered round to congratulate Oddo and Frolich on the success of their hunting. The women durst only hastily stroke the palpitating sides of the poor beast; but Peder, who had handled many scores in his lifetime, boldly seized its head, and felt its horns and the bones from whence they grew, to ascertain its age.

“Do you fancy you have made a prize of a wild deer, boy?” he asked of his grandson.

"To be sure," said Oddo.

"I thought you had had more curiosity than to take such a thing for granted, Oddo. See here! Is not this ear slit?"

"Why, yes," Oddo admitted: "but it is not a slit of this year or last. It may have belonged to the Lapps once upon a time; but it has been wild for so long that it is all the same as if it had never been in a fold. It will never be claimed."

"I am of your opinion there, boy. I wish you joy of your sport."

"You may: for I doubt whether anybody will do better to-day. Hund will not, for one, if it is he who has gone out with the boat; and I think I cannot be mistaken in the handling of his oar."

"Have you seen him? Where? What is he doing?" asked one and another.

Before Oddo could answer, Madame Erlingsen desired that he would go home with his grandfather, and tell Ulla about the deer, while he warned himself. She did not wish her daughters to hear what he might have to tell of Hund. Sti-orna, too, was better out of the way. Oddo had not half told the story of the deer to his grandmother, when his mistress and Erica entered.

"Did not you see M. Kollsen in the boat with Hund?" she enquired.

"No. Hund was quite alone, pulling with all his might down the fiord. The tide was with him, so that he shot along like a fish."

"How do you know it was Hund that you saw?"

"Don't I know our boat? And don't I know his pull? It is no more like Rolf's than Rolf's is like master's."

“Perhaps he was making for the best fishing-ground as fast as he could.”

“We shall see that by the fish he brings home.”

“True. By supper-time we shall know.”

“Hund will not be home by supper-time,” said Oddo decidedly.

“Why not? Come, say out what you mean.”

“Well: I will tell you what I saw. I watched him rowing as fast as his arm and the tide would carry him. It was so plain that there was a plan in his head, that I forgot the deer in watching him; and I followed on from point to point, catching a sight now and then, till I had gone a good stretch beyond Salten heights. I was just going to turn back when I took one more look, and he was then pulling in for the land.”

“On the north shore or south?” asked Peder.

“The north,—just at the narrow part of the fiord, where one can see into the holes of the rocks opposite.”

“The fiord takes a wide sweep below there,” observed Peder.

“Yes; and that was why he landed,” replied Oddo. “He was then but a little way from the fishing-ground, if he had wanted fish. But he drove up the boat into a little cove,—a narrow dark creek, where it will lie safe enough, I have no doubt, till he comes back: if he means to come back.”

“Why, where should he go? What should he do but come back?” asked Madame Erlingsen.

“He is now gone over the ridge to the north. I saw him moor the boat, and begin to climb; and I watched his dark figure on the white snow, higher and higher, till it was a speck, and I could not make it out.”

“That is the way you will lose your eyes,” exclaimed Ulla. “How often have I warned you,—and many others as giddy as you? When you have lost your eyes, you will think you had better have minded my advice, and not have stared at the snow after a runaway that is better there than here.”

“What do you think of this story, Peder?” asked his mistress.

“I think Hund has taken the short cut over the promontory, on business of his own at the islands. He is not on any business of yours, depend upon it, Madame.”

“And what business can he have among the islands?”

“I could say that with more certainty if I knew exactly where the pirate vessel is.”

“That is your idea, Erica,” said her mistress. “I saw what your thoughts were, an hour ago, before we knew all this.”

“I was thinking then, Madame, that if Hund was gone to join the pirates, Nipen would be very ready to give them a wind just now. A baffling wind would be our only defence; and we cannot expect that much from Nipen to-day.”

“I will do anything in the world,” cried Oddo, eagerly. “Send me anywhere. Do think of something that I can do.”

“What must be done, Peder?” asked his mistress. “There is quite enough to fear, Erica, without a word of Nipen. Pirates on the coast, and one farm-house seen burning already.”

“I will tell you what you must let me do, Madame,” said Erica. “Indeed you must not oppose me. My mind is quite set upon going for

the boat,—immediately,—this very minute. That will give us time,—it will give us safety for this night. Hund might bring seven or eight men upon us over the promontory; but if they find no boat, I think they can hardly work up the windings of the fiord in their own vessel to-night;—unless, indeed,” she added, with a sigh, “they have a most favourable wind.”

“All this is true enough,” said her mistress; “but how will you go? Will you swim?”

“The raft, Madame.”

“And there is the old skiff on Thor islet,” said Oddo. “It is a rickety little thing, hardly big enough for two; but it will carry down Erica and me, if we go before the tide turns.”

“But how will you get to Thor islet?” enquired Madam Erlingsen. “I wish the scheme were not such a wild one.”

“A wild one must serve at such a time, Madame,” replied Erica. “Rolf had lashed several logs before he went. I am sure we can get over to the islet. See, Madame, the fiord is as smooth as a pond.”

“Let her go,” said Peder. “She will never repent.”

“Then come back, I charge you, if you find the least danger,” said her mistress. “No one is safer at the oar than you: but if there is a ripple in the water, or a gust on the heights, or a cloud in the sky, come back. Such is my command, Erica.”

“Wife,” said Peder, “give her your pelisse. That will save her seeing the girls before she goes. And she shall have my cap, and then there is not an eye along the fiord that can tell whether she is man or woman.”

Ulla lent her deerskin pelisse willingly enough; but she entreated that Oddo might be kept at home. She folded her arms about the boy with tears; but Peder decided the matter with the words,

“Let him go. It is the least he can do to make up for last night.—Equip, Oddo.”

Oddo equipped willingly enough. In two minutes, he and his companion looked like two walking bundles of fur. Oddo carried a frail basket, containing rye bread, salt fish, and a flask of corn-brandy: for in Norway no one goes on the shortest expedition without carrying provisions.

“Surely it must be dusk by this time,” said Peder.

It was dusk: and this was well, as the pair could steal down to the shore without being perceived from the house. Madame Erlingsen gave them her blessing, saying, that if the enterprise saved them from nothing worse than Hund's company this night, it would be a great good. There could be no more comfort in having Hund for an inmate; for some improper secret he certainly had. Her hope was that, finding the boat gone, he would never show himself again.

“One would think,” continued the lady, when she returned from watching Erica and Oddo disappear in the dusk,—“one would think Erica had never known fear. Her step is as firm, and her eye as clear, as if she had never trembled in the course of her life.”

“She knows how to act to-night,” said Peder; “and she is going into danger for her lover, instead of waiting at home while her lover goes into danger for her. A hundred pirates in the fiord would not make her tremble as she trembled last night.

Rather a hundred pirates than Nipen angry, she would say."

"There is her weakness," observed her mistress.

"Can we speak of weakness, after what we have just seen,—if I may say so, Madame?"

"I think so," replied Madame Erlingsen. "I think it a weakness in those who believe that a just and tender Providence watches over us all, to fear what any power in the universe can do to them."

"M. Kollsen does not make progress in teaching the people what you say, Madame. He only gets distrusted by it."

"When M. Kollsen has had more experience, he will find that this is not a matter for displeasure. He will not succeed while he is displeased at what his people think sacred. When he is an older man, he will pity the innocent for what they suffer from superstition; and this pity will teach him how to speak of Providence to such as our Erica.—But here are my girls, coming to seek me. I must meet them, to prevent their missing Erica."

"Get them to rest early, Madame."

"Certainly. And you will watch in this house, Peder, and I at home."

"Trust me for hearing the oars at a furlong off, Madame."

"That is more than I can promise," said the lady; "but the owl shall not be more awake than I."

CHAPTER V.

THE WATER-SPRITES' DOINGS.

ERICA now profited by her lover's industry in the morning. He had so far advanced with the raft that, though no one would have thought of taking it in its present state to the mouth of the fiord for shipment, it would serve as a conveyance in still water, for a short distance, safely enough.

And still indeed the waters were. As Erica and Oddo were busily and silently employed in tying moss round their oars, to muffle their sound, the ripple of the tide upon the white sand could scarcely be heard; and it appeared to the eye as if the lingering remains of the daylight brooded on the fiord, unwilling to depart. The stars had, however, been showing themselves for some time; and they might now be seen twinkling below almost as clearly and steadily as overhead. As Erica and Oddo put their little raft off from the shore, and then waited, with their oars suspended, to observe whether the tide carried them towards the islet they must reach, it seemed as if some invisible hand was pushing them forth, to shiver the bright pavement of constellations as it lay. Star after star was shivered, and its bright fragments danced in their wake; and those fragments reunited and became a star again, as the waters closed over the

path of the raft, and subsided into perfect stillness.

The tide favoured Erica's object. A few strokes of the oar brought the raft to the right point for landing on the islet. They stepped ashore, and towed the raft along till they came to the skiff, and then they fastened the raft with the boat-hook which had been fixed there for the skiff. This done, Oddo ran to turn over the little boat, and examine its condition: but he found he could not move it. It was frozen fast to the ground. It was scarcely possible to get a firm hold of it, it was so slippery with ice; and all pulling and pushing of the two together was in vain, though the boat was so light that either of them could have lifted and carried it in a time of thaw.

This circumstance caused a good deal of delay: and, what was worse, it obliged them to make some noise. They struck at the ice with sharp stones; but it was long before they could make any visible impression; and Erica proposed, again and again, that they should proceed on the raft. Oddo was unwilling. The skiff would go so incomparably faster, that it was worth spending some time upon it: and the fears he had had of its leaking were removed, now that he found what a sheet of ice it was covered with,—ice which would not melt to admit a drop of water while they were in it. So he knocked and knocked away, wishing that the echoes would be quiet for once, and then laughing as he imagined the ghost-stories that would spring up all round the fiord to-morrow, from the noise he was then making.

Erica worked hard too; and one advantage of their labour was that they were well warmed before

they put off again. The boat's icy fastenings were all broken at last: and it was launched: but all was not yet ready. The skiff had lain in a direction east and west; and its north side had so much thicker a coating of ice than the other, that its balance was destroyed. It hung so low on one side as to promise to upset with a touch.

"We must clear off more of the ice," said Erica. "But how late it is growing!"

"No more knocking, I say," replied Oddo. "There is a quieter way of trimming the boat."

He fastened a few stones to the gunwale on the lighter side, and took in a few more for the purpose of shifting the weight, if necessary, while they were on their way.

They did not leave quiet behind them, when they departed. They had roused the multitude of eider-ducks, and other sea-fowl, which thronged the islet, and which now, being roused, began their night feeding and flying, though at an earlier hour than usual. When their discordant cries were left so far behind as to be softened by distance, the flapping of wings and swash of water, as the fowl plunged in, still made the air busy all around.

The rowers were so occupied with the management of their dangerous craft, that they had not spoken since they left the islet. The skiff would have been unmanageable by any maiden and boy in our country; but on the coast of Norway it is as natural to persons of all ages and degrees to guide a boat as to walk. Swiftly but cautiously they shot through the water, till, at length, Oddo uttered a most hideous croak.

"What do you mean?" asked Erica, hastily glancing round her.

Oddo laughed, and looked upwards as he croaked again. He was answered by a similar croak, and a large raven was seen flying homewards over the fiord for the night. Then the echoes all croaked, till the whole region seemed to be full of ravens.

“Are you sure you know the cove?” asked Erica, who wished to put an end to this sound, unwelcome to the superstitious. “Do not make that bird croak so; it will be quiet if you let it alone. Are you sure you can find the cove again?”

“Quite sure. I wish I was as sure that Hund would not find it again before me. Pull away.”

“How much farther is it?”

“Farther than I like to think of. I doubt your arm holding out. I wish Rolf was here.”

Erica did not wish the same thing. She thought that Rolf was, on the whole, safer waging war with bears than with pirates; especially if Hund was among them. She pulled her oar cheerfully, observing that there was no fatigue at present; and that, when they were once afloat in the heavier boat, and had cleared the cove, there need be no hurry, —unless, indeed, they should see something of the pirate schooner on the way: and of this she had no expectation, as the booty that might be had where the fishery was beginning was worth more than anything that could be found higher up the fiords:—to say nothing of the danger of running up into the country so far as that getting away again depended upon one particular wind.

Yet Erica looked behind her after every few strokes of her oar; and once, when she saw something, her start was felt like a start of the skiff itself. There was a fire glancing and gleaming

and quivering over the water, some way down the fiord.

“Some people night-fishing,” observed Oddo. “What sport they will have! I wish I was with them. How fast we go! How you can row when you choose! I can see the man that is holding the torch. Cannot you see his black figure? And the spearman,—see how he stands at the bow,—now going to cast his spear! I wish I was there.”

“We must get farther away,—into the shadow somewhere,—or wait,” observed Erica. “I had rather not wait,—it is growing so late. We might creep along under that promontory, in the shadow, if you would be quiet. I wonder whether you can be silent in the sight of night-fishing.”

“To be sure,” said Oddo, disposed to be angry, and only kept from it by the thought of last night. He helped to bring the skiff into the shadow of the overhanging rocks, and only spoke once more, to whisper that the fishing-boat was drifting down with the tide, and that he thought their cove lay between them and the fishing-party.

It was so. As the skiff rounded the point of the promontory, Oddo pointed out what appeared like a mere dark chasm in the high perpendicular wall of rock that bounded the waters. This chasm still looked so narrow, on approaching it, that Erica hesitated to push her skiff into it, till certain that there was no one there. Oddo, however, was so clear that she might safely do this, so noiseless was their rowing, and it was so plain that there was no footing on the rocks by which he might enter to explore, that in a sort of desperation, and seeing nothing else to be done, Erica agreed. She wished it had been summer, when either of them might

have learned what they wanted by swimming. This was now out of the question; and stealthily therefore she pulled her little craft into the deepest shadow, and crept into the cove.

At a little distance from the entrance it widened; but it was a wonder to Erica that even Oddo's eyes should have seen Hund moor his boat here from the other side of the fiord; though the fiord was not more than a gunshot over in this part. Oddo himself wondered, till he recalled how the sun was shining down into the chasm at the time. By starlight, the outline of all that the cove contained might be seen; the outline of the boat, among other things. There she lay! But there was something about her which was unpleasant enough. There were three men in her.

What was to be done now? Here was the very worst danger that Erica had feared;—worse than finding the boat gone;—worse than meeting it in the wide fiord. What was to be done?

There was nothing for it but to do nothing,—to lie perfectly still in the shadow, ready, however, to push out on the first movement of the boat to leave the cove; for, though the canoe might remain unnoticed at present, it was impossible that anybody could pass out of the cove without seeing her. In such a case, there would be nothing for it but a race,—a race for which Erica and Oddo held themselves prepared, without any mutual explanation; for they dared not speak. The faintest whisper would have crept over the smooth water to the ears in the larger boat.

One thing was certain,—that something must happen presently. It is impossible for the hardiest men to sit inactive in a boat, for any length of

time, in a January night in Norway. In the calmest nights the cold is only to be sustained by means of the glow from strong exercise. It was certain that these three men could not have been long in their places, and that they would not sit many moments more, without some change in their arrangements.

They did not seem to be talking; for Oddo, who was the best listener in the world, could not discover that a sound issued from their boat. He fancied they were drowsy; and, being aware what were the consequences of yielding to drowsiness in severe cold, the boy began to entertain high hopes of taking these three men prisoners. The whole country would ring with such a feat, performed by Erica and himself.

The men were, however, too much awake to be made prisoners of at present. One was seen to drink from a flask; and the hoarse voice of another was heard grumbling, as far as the listeners could make out, at being kept waiting. The third then rose to look about him; and Erica trembled from head to foot. He only looked upon the land, however, declared he saw nothing of those he was expecting, and began to warm himself as he stood, by repeatedly clapping his arms across his breast, in the way that hackney-coachmen and porters do in England. This was Hund. He could not have been known by his figure; for all persons look alike in wolf-skin pelisses; but the voice and the action were his. Oddo saw how Erica shuddered. He put his finger on his lips; but Erica needed no reminding of the necessity of quietness.

The other two men then rose; and, after a consultation, the words of which could not be heard,

all stepped ashore, one after another, and climbed a rocky pathway.

"Now, now!" whispered Erica. "Now we can get away."

"Not without the boat," said Oddo. "You would not leave them the boat!"

"No,—not if—but they will be back in a moment. They are only gone to hasten their companions."

"I know it," said Oddo. "Now two strokes forward!"

While she gave these two strokes, which brought the skiff to the stern of the boat, Erica saw that Oddo had taken out a knife, which gleamed in the star-light. It was for cutting the thong by which the boat was fastened to a birch pole, the other end of which was hooked on shore. This was to save his going ashore to unhook the pole. It was well for him that boat-chains were not in use, owing to the scarcity of metal in that region. The clink of a chain would certainly have been heard.

Quickly and silently he entered the boat and tied the skiff to its stern; and he and Erica took their places where the men had sat one minute before. They used their own muffled oars to turn the boat round, till Oddo observed that the boat oars were muffled too. Then voices were heard again. The men were returning. Strongly did the two companions draw their strokes till a good breadth of water lay between them and the shore; and then till they had again entered the deep shadow which shrouded the mouth of the cove. There they paused.

"In with you!" some loud voice said, as man after man was seen in outline, coming down the

pathway. "In with you! We have lost time enough already."

"Where is she? I can't see the boat," answered the foremost man.

"You can't miss her," said one behind, "unless the brandy has got into your eyes."

"So I should have said; but I do miss her. It is very incomprehensible to me."

Oddo shook with stifled laughter as he partly saw and partly overheard the perplexity of these men. At last one gave a deep groan, and another declared that the spirits of the fiord were against them, and there was no doubt that their boat was now lying twenty fathoms deep, at the bottom of the creek; drawn down by the strong hand of an angry water-spirit. Oddo squeezed Erica's little hand as he heard this. If it had been light enough, he would have seen that even she was smiling.

One of the men mourned their having no other boat; so that they must give up their plan. Another said that if they had a dozen boats, he would not set foot in one, after what had happened. He should go straight back, the way he came, to their own vessel. Another said he would not go till he had looked abroad over the fiord, for some chance of seeing the boat. This he persisted in, though told by the rest that it was absurd to suppose that the boat had loosed itself, and gone out into the fiord, in the course of the two minutes that they had been absent. He showed the fragment of the cut thong, in proof of the boat not having loosed itself; and set off for a point on the heights which he said overlooked the fiord. One or two went with him; the rest returning up the

narrow pathway at some speed,—such speed that Erica thought they were afraid of the hindmost being caught by the same enemy that had taken their boat. Oddo observed this too: and he quickened their pace by setting up very loud the mournful cry with which he was accustomed to call out to the plovers, on the mountain side, on sporting days. No sound can be more melancholy; and now, as it rang from the rocks, it was so unsuitable to the place, and so terrible to the already frightened men, that they ran on as fast as the slipperiness of the rocks would allow, till they were all out of sight over the ridge.

“Now for it, before the other two come out above us there!” said Oddo: and in another minute, they were again in the fiord, keeping as much in the shadow as they could, however, till they must strike over to the islet.

“Thank God that we came!” exclaimed Erica. “We shall never forget what we owe you, Oddo. You shall see, by the care we take of your grandfather and Ulla, that we do not forget what you have done this night. If Nipen will only forgive, for the sake of this ——.”

“We were just in the nick of time,” observed Oddo. “It was better than if we had been earlier.”

“I do not know,” said Erica. “Here are their brandy-bottles, and many things besides. I had rather not have had to bring these away.”

“But if we had been earlier, they would not have had their fright. That is the best part of it. Depend upon it, some that have not said their prayers for long will say them to-night.”

“That will be good. But I do not like carry-

ing home these things that are not ours. If they are seen at Erlingsen's, they may bring the pirates down upon us. I would leave them on the islet, but that the skiff has to be left there too; and that would explain our trick."

Erica would not consent to throw the property overboard. This would be robbing those who had not actually injured her, whatever their intentions might have been. She thought that if the goods were left upon some barren, uninhabited part of the shore, the pirates would probably be the first to find them: and that, if not, the rumour of such an extraordinary fact, spread by the simple country people, would be sure to reach them. So Oddo carried on shore, at the first stretch of white beach they came to, the brandy flasks, the bear-skins, the tobacco-pouch, the muskets and powder-horns, and the tinder-box. He scattered these about, just above high-water mark, laughing to think how report would tell of the sprites' care in placing all these articles out of reach of injury from the water.

Oddo did not want for light while doing this. When he returned, he found Erica gazing up over the towering precipices, at the Northern Lights, which had now unfurled their broad yellow blaze. She was glad that they had not appeared sooner, to spoil the adventure of the night; but she was thankful to have the way home thus illumined, now that the business was done. She answered with so much alacrity to Oddo's question whether she was not very weary, that he ventured to say two things which had before been upon his tongue, without his having courage to utter them.

"You will not be so afraid of Nipen any more,"

observed he, glancing at her face, of which he could see every feature by the quivering light. "You see how well everything has turned out."

"O, hush! It is too soon yet to speak so. It is never right to speak so. There is no knowing till next Christmas, nor even then, that Nipen forgives; and the first twenty-four hours are not over yet. Pray do not speak any more, Oddo."

"Well, not about that. But what was it exactly that you thought Hund would do with this boat and those people?—Did you think," he continued, after a short pause, "that they would come up to Erlingsen's to rob the place?"

"Not for the object of robbing the place; because there is very little that is worth their taking; far less than at the fishing-grounds. Not but they might have robbed us, if they took a fancy to anything we have. No: I thought, and I still think, that they would have carried off Rolf, led on by Hund ——"

"O, ho! carried off Rolf! So here is the secret of your wonderful courage to-night,—you who durst not look round at your own shadow last night! This is the secret of your not being tired,—you who are out of breath with rowing a mile sometimes!"

"That is in summer," pleaded Erica. "However, you have my secret, as you say,—a thing which is no secret at home. We all think that Hund bears such a grudge against Rolf, for having got the houseman's place ——"

"And for nothing else?"

"That," continued Erica, "he would be glad to— to—"

"To get rid of Rolf, and be a houseman, and

get betrothed instead of him. Well: Hund is baulked for this time. Rolf must look to himself after to-day."

Erica sighed deeply. She did not believe that Rolf would attend to his own safety: and the future looked very dark,—all shrouded by her fears.

By the time the skiff was deposited where it had been found, both the rowers were so weary that they gave up the idea of taking the raft in tow, as for full security they ought to do. They doubted whether they could get home, if they had more weight to draw than their own boat. It was well that they left this incumbrance behind: for there was quite peril and difficulty enough without it; and Erica's strength and spirits failed the more, the farther the enemy was left behind.

A breath of wind seemed to bring a sudden darkening of the friendly lights which had blazed up higher and brighter, from their first appearance till now. Both rowers looked down the fiord, and uttered an exclamation at the same moment.

"See the fog!" cried Oddo, putting fresh strength into his oar.

"O Nipen! Nipen!" mournfully exclaimed Erica. "Here it is, Oddo,—the west wind!"

The west wind is, in winter, the great foe of the fishermen of the fiords: it brings in the fog from the sea; and the fogs of the Arctic Circle are no trifling enemy. If Nipen really had the charge of the winds, he could not more emphatically show his displeasure towards any unhappy boatman than by overtaking him with the west wind and fog.

"The wind must have just changed," said Oddo, pulling exhausting strokes, as the fog marched to-

wards them over the water, like a solid and immeasurably lofty wall. "The wind must have gone right round in a minute."

"To be sure,—since you said what you did of Nipen," replied Erica, bitterly.

Oddo made no answer; but he did what he could. Erica had to tell him not to wear himself out too quickly, as there was no saying now how long they should be on the water.

How long they had been on the water, how far they had deviated from their right course, they could not at all tell, when, at last, more by accident than skill, they touched the shore near home, and heard friendly voices, and saw the light of torches through the thick air. The fog had wrapped them round so that they could not even see the water, or each other. They had rowed mechanically, sometimes touching the rock, sometimes grazing upon the sand, but never knowing where they were till the ringing of a bell, which they recognised as the farm bell, roused hope in their hearts, and strengthened them to throw off the fatal drowsiness caused by cold and fatigue. They made towards the bell; and then heard Peder's shouts, and next saw the dull light of two torches which looked as if they could not burn in the fog. The old man lent a strong hand to pull up the boat upon the beach, and to lift out the benumbed rowers; and they were presently revived by having their limbs chafed, and by a strong dose of the universal medicine,—corn-brandy and camphor,—which in Norway, neither man nor woman, young nor old, sick nor well, thinks of refusing upon occasion.

When Erica was in bed, warm beneath an eider-down coverlid, her mistress bent over her and whispered,

“ You saw and heard Hund himself?”

“ Hund himself, Madame.”

“ What shall we do if he comes back before my husband is home from the bear-hunt?”

“ If he comes, it will be in fear and penitence, thinking that all the powers are against him. But O, Madame, let him never know how it really was !”

“ He must not know. Leave that to me, and go to sleep now, Erica. You ought to rest well ; for there is no saying what you and Oddo have saved us from. I could not have asked such a service. My husband and I must see how we can reward it.” And her kind and grateful mistress kissed Erica’s cheek, though Erica tried to explain that she was thinking most of some one else, when she undertook this expedition.

“ Then let him thank you in his own way,” replied Madame Erlingsen. “ Meantime, why should not I thank you in mine?”

Stiorna here opened her eyes for an instant. When she next did so her mistress was gone ; and she told in the morning what an odd dream she had had, of her mistress being in her room, and kissing Erica. It was so distinct a dream that, if the thing had not been so ridiculous, she could almost have declared that she had seen it.

CHAPTER VI.

SPRING.

GREAT was Stiorna's consternation at Hund's non-appearance, the next day, seeing, as she did with her own eyes, that the boat was safe in its proper place. She had provided salt for his cod, and a welcome for himself; and she watched in vain for either. She saw too that no one wished him back. He was rarely spoken of; and then it was with dislike or fear: and when she wept over the idea of his being drowned, or carried off by hostile spirits, the only comfort offered her was that she need not fear his being dead, or that he could not come back if he chose. She was indeed obliged to suppose, at last, that it was his choice to keep away; for amidst the flying rumours that amused the inhabitants of the district for the rest of the winter,—rumours of the movements of the pirate-vessel, and of the pranks of the spirits of the region, there were some such clear notices of the appearance of Hund,—so many eyes had seen him in one place or another, by land and water, by day and night, that Stiorna could not doubt of his being alive, and free to come home or stay away as he pleased. She could not conceal from herself that he had probably joined the pirates; and heartily as these pirates were feared throughout the Nordland coasts, they were not more heartily hated by any than by the jealous Stiorna.

Her salt was wanted as much as if Hund had brought home a boat-full of cod; and she might have given her welcome to the hunting-party. Erlingsen and Rolf came home sooner than might reasonably have been expected, and well laden with bear's flesh. The whole family of bears had been found and shot. The flesh of the cubs had been divided among the hunters; and Erlingsen was complimented with the feet of the old bear, as it was he who had roused the neighbours, and led the hunt. Busy was every farm-house (and none so busy as Erlingsen's) in salting some of the meat, freezing some, and cooking a part for a feast on the occasion.

Erlingsen kept a keen and constant look-out upon the fiord, in the midst of all the occupations and gaieties of the rest of the winter. His wife's account of the adventures of the day of his absence made him anxious: and he never went a mile out of sight of home, so vivid in his imagination was the vision of his house burning, and his family at the mercy of pirates. Nothing happened, however, to confirm his fears. The enemy were never heard of in the fiord; and the cod-fishers who came up, before the softening of the snow, to sell some of their produce in the interior of the country, gave such accounts as seemed to show that the fishing-grounds were the object of the foreign thieves;—for foreign they were declared to be:—some said Russian; and others a mixture from hostile nations. This last information gave more impulse to the love of country for which the Norwegians are remarkable, than all that had been reported from the seat of war. The Nordlanders always drank success to their country's arms, in the first glass of corn-

brandy at dinner. They paid their taxes cheerfully; and any newspaper that the clergyman put in circulation was read till it fell to pieces: but the neighbourhood of foreign pirates proved a more powerful stimulant still. The standing toast, *Gamil Norgé* (Old Norway), was drunk with such enthusiasm that the little children shouted and defied the enemy; and the baby in its mother's lap clapped its hands when every voice joined in the national song *For Norgé*. Hitherto the war had gone forward upon the soil of another kingdom: it seemed now as if a sprinkling of it,—a little of its excitement and danger,—was brought to their own doors; and vehement was the spirit that it roused; though some thefts of cod, brandy, and a little money, were all that had really happened yet.

The interval of security gave Rolf a good opportunity to ridicule and complain of Erica's fears. He laughed at the danger of an attack from Hund and his comrades, as that danger was averted. He laughed at the west wind and fog sent by Nipen's wrath, as Erica had reached home in spite of it. He contended that, so far from Nipen being offended, there was either no Nipen, or it was not angry, or it was powerless; for everything had gone well; and he always ended with pointing to the deer,—a good thing led to the very door,—and to the result of the bear-hunt,—a great event always in a Nordlander's life, and, in this instance, one of most fortunate issue. There was no saying how many of the young of the farm-yard would live and flourish this summer, on account of the timely destruction of this family of bears. So Rolf worked away, with a cheerful heart, as the days grew longer,—now mending the boat,—now fishing, now plough-

ing,—and then rolling logs into the melting streams, to be carried down into the river, or into the fiord, when the rush of waters should come from the heights of Sulitelma.

Hard as Rolf worked, he did not toil like Oddo. Between them, they had to supply Hund's place,—to do his work. Nobody desired to see Hund back again; and Erlingsen would willingly have taken another in his stead, to make his return impossible; but there was no one to he had. It was useless to inquire till the fishing-season should be over: and when that was over, the hay and harvest seasons would follow so quickly, that it was scarcely likely that any youth would offer himself till the first frosts set in. It was Oddo's desire that the place should remain vacant till he could show that he, young as he was, was worth as much as Hund. If any one was hired, he wished that it might be a herd-boy, under him; and strenuously did he toil, this spring, to show that he was now beyond a mere herd-boy's place. It was he who first fattened, and then killed and skinned the rein-deer,—a more than ordinary feat, as it was full two months past the regular season. It was he who watched the making of the first eider-duck's nest, and brought home the first down. All the month of April, he never failed in the double work of the farm-yard and islet. He tended the cattle in the morning, and turned out the goats, when the first patches of green appeared from beneath the snow: and then he was off to the islet, or to some one of the breeding stations among the rocks, punctually stripping the nests of the down, as the poor ducks renewed the supply from their breasts; and as carefully staying his hand, when he saw, by the yellow tinge of the

down, that the duck had no more to give, and the drake had now supplied what was necessary for hatching the eggs. Then he watched for the eggs; and never had Madame Erlingsen had such a quantity brought home; though Oddo assured her that he had left enough in the nests for every duck to have her brood. Then he was ready to bring home the goats again, long before sunset,—for, by this time, the sun set late,—and to take his turn at mending any fence that might have been injured by the spring-floods: and then he never forgot to wash and dress himself, and go in for his grandmother's blessing; and after all, he was not too tired to sit up as late as if he were a man,—even till past nine sometimes,—spending the last hour of the evening in working at the bell-collars which Hund had left half done, and which must be finished before the cattle went to the mountain; or, if the young ladies were disposed to dance, he was never too tired to play the clarionet; though it now and then happened that the tune went rather oddly: and when Orga and Frolich looked at him, to see what he was about, his eyes were shut, and his fingers looked as if they were moving of their own accord. If this happened, the young ladies would finish their waltz at once, and thank him, and his mistress would wish him good night; and when he was gone, his master would tell old Peder that that grandson of his was a promising lad, and very diligent; and Peder would make a low bow, and say it was greatly owing to Rolf's good example; and then Erica would blush, and be kinder than ever to Oddo the next day.

So came on and passed away the spring of this year at Erlingsen's farm. It soon passed; for

spring in Nordland lasts only a month. In that short time had the snow first become soft, and then dingy, and then vanished, except on the heights and in places where it had drifted. The streams had broken their long pause of silence, and now leaped and rushed along, till every rock overhanging both sides of the fiord was musical with falling waters, and glittering with silver threads,—for the cataracts looked no more than this in so vast a scene. Every mill was going, after the long idleness of winter: and about the bridges which spanned the falls were little groups of the peasants gathered, mending such as had burst with the floods, or strengthening such as did not seem secure enough for the passage of the herds to the mountain.

Busy as the maidens were with the cows that were calving, and with the care of the young kids, they found leisure to pry into the promise of the spring. In certain warm nooks, where the sunshine was reflected from the surrounding rocks, they daily watched for what else might appear, when once the grass, of brilliant green, had shown itself from beneath the snow. There they found the strawberry, and the wild raspberry, promising to carpet the ground with their white blossoms; while in one corner the lily of the valley began to push up its pairs of leaves; and from the crevices of the rock, the barberry and the dwarf birch grew, every twig showing swelling buds, or an early sprout.

While these cheerful pursuits went on out of doors during the one busy month of spring, a slight shade of sadness was thrown over the household within by the decline of old Ulla. It was hardly sadness; it was little more than gravity; for Ulla herself was glad to go; Peder knew that he should

soon follow ; and every one else was reconciled to one who had suffered so long going to her rest.

“The winter and I are going together, my dear,” said she one day, when Erica placed on her pillow a green shoot of birch which she had taken from out of the very mouth of a goat. “The hoary winter and hoary I have lived out our time, and we are departing together. I shall make way for you young people, and give you your turn, as he is giving way to spring ; and let nobody pretend to be sorry for it. Who pretends to be sorry when winter is gone ?”

“But winter will come again, so soon and so certainly, Ulla,” said Erica, mournfully : “and when it is come again, we shall still miss you.”

“Well, my dear, I will say nothing against that. It is good for the living to miss the dead, as long as they do not wish them back. As for me, Erica, I feel as if I could not but miss you, go where I may.”

“O, do not say that, Ulla.”

“Why not say it if I feel it ? Who could be displeased with me for grasping still at the hand that has smoothed my bed so long, when I am going to some place that will be very good, no doubt, but where everything must be strange at first ? He who gave you to me, to be my nurse, will not think the worse of me for missing you, wherever I may be.”

“There will be little Henrica,” observed Erica

“Ah, yes ! there is nothing I think of more than that. That dear child died on my shoulder. Fain would her mother have had her in her arms at the last ; but she was in such extremity that to move her would have been to end all at once ; and so

she died away, with her head on my shoulder. I thought then it was a sign that I should be the first to meet her again. But I shall take care and not stand in the way of her mother's rights."

Here Ulla grew so earnest in imagining her meeting with Henrica, still fancying her the dependent little creature she had been on earth, that she was impatient to be gone. Erica's idea was that this child might now have become so wise and so mighty in the wisdom of a better world, as to be no such plaything as Ulla supposed; but she said nothing to spoil the old woman's pleasure.

When Peder came in, to sit beside his old companion's bed, and sing her to sleep, she told him that she hoped to be by when he opened his now dark eyes upon the sweet light of a heavenly day; and, if she might, she would meantime make up his dreams for him, and make him believe that he saw the most glorious sights of old Norway,—more glorious than are to be seen in any other part of this lower world. There should be no end to the gleaming lakes, and dim forests, and bright green valleys, and silvery waterfalls that he should see in his dreams, if she might have the making of them. There was no end to the delightful things Ulla looked forward to, and the kind things she hoped to be able to do for those she left behind, when once she should have quitted her present helpless state: and she thought so much of these things, that when M. Kollsen arrived, he found that instead of her needing to be reconciled to death, she was impatient to be gone. The first thing he heard her say, when all was so dim before her dying eyes, and so confused to her failing ears, that she did not know the pastor had arrived, was

that she was less uneasy now about Nipen's displeasure against the young people. Perhaps she might be able to explain and prevent mischief: and if not, the young people's marriage would soon be taking place now, and then they might show such attention to Nipen as would make the spirit forgive and forget.

"Hush, now, dear Ulla!" said Erica. "Here is the pastor."

"Do not say 'hush!'" said M. Kollsen, sternly. "Whatever is said of this kind I ought to hear, that I may meet the delusion. I must have conversation with this poor woman, to prevent her very last breath being poisoned with superstition. You are a member of the Lutheran church, Ulla?"

With humble pleasure, Ulla told of the satisfaction which the bishop of Tronyem, of seventy years ago, had expressed at her confirmation. It was this which obtained her a good place, and Peder's regard, and all the good that had happened in her long life since. Yes: she was indeed a member of the Lutheran church, she thanked God.

"And in what part of the Scriptures of our church do you find mention of — of —— (I hate the very names of these pretended spirits.)—Where in the Scriptures are you bidden or permitted to believe in spirits and demons of the wood and the mountain?"

Ulla declared that her learning in the Scriptures was but small. She knew only what she had been taught, and a little that she had picked up: but she remembered that the former bishop of Tronyem himself had hung up an axe in the forest, on Midsummer eve, for the wood-demon's use, if it pleased.

Peder observed, that we all believe so many things that are not found mentioned in the Scripture, that perhaps it would be wisest and kindest, by a dying bed, where moments were precious, to speak of those high things which the Scriptures discourse of, and which all Christians believe. These were the subjects for Ulla now : the others might be reasoned of when she was in her grave.

The pastor was not quite satisfied with this way of attending the dying ; but there was something in the aged man's voice and manner quite irresistible, as he sat calmly awaiting the departure of the last companion of his own generation. M. Kollsen took out his Bible, and read what Ulla gladly heard, till her husband knew by the slackened clasp of her hand that she heard no longer. She had become insensible, and before sunset had departed.

Rolf had continued his kind offices to the old couple with the utmost respect and propriety, to the end refusing to go out of call during the last few days of Ulla's decline : but he had observed, with some anxiety, that there was certainly a shoal of herrings in the fiord, and that it was high time he was making use of the sunny days for his fishing. In order to go about this duty without any delay, when again at liberty, he had brought the skiff up to the beach for repair, and had it nearly ready for use by the day of the funeral. The family boat was too large for his occasions, now that Hund was not here to take an oar : and he expected to do great things alone in the little manageable skiff.

When he had assisted Peder to lay Ulla's head in the grave, and guided him back to the house,

Rolf drew Erica's arm within his own, and led her away as if for a walk. No one interfered with them; for the family knew that their hearts must be very full, and that they must have much to say to each other, now that the event had happened which was to cause their marriage very soon. They would now wait no longer than to pay proper respect to Ulla's memory, and to improve the house and its furniture a little, so as to make it fit for the bride.

Rolf would have led Erica to the beach; but she begged to go first to see the grave again, while they knew that no one was there. The grave was dug close by the little mound beneath which Henrica lay. Henrica's was railed round, with a paling which had been fresh painted,—a task which Erlingsen performed with his own hands every spring. The forget-me-not, which the Nordlanders plant upon the graves of those they love, overran the hillock, and the white blossoms of the wild strawberry peeped out from under the thick grass; so that this grave looked a perfect contrast to that of Ulla, newly made and bare. The lovers looked at this last with dissatisfaction.

"It shall be completely railed in before to-morrow night," said Rolf.

"But cannot we dress it a little now? I could transplant some flower-roots presently, and some forget-me-not from Henrica's hillock, if we had sods for the rest. Never mind spoiling any other nook. The grass will soon grow again."

Rolf's spade was busy presently; and Erica planted and watered till the new grave, if it did not compare with the child's, showed tokens of care, and promise of beauty.

“Now,” said Rolf, when they had done, and put away their tools, and sat down on the pine log from which the pales were to be made, so that their lengthening shadows fell across the new grave, —“Now, Erica, you know what she who lies there would like us to be settling. She herself said her burial-day would soon be over; and then would come our wedding-day.”

“When everything is ready,” replied Erica, “we will fix; but not now. There is much to be done;—there are many uncertainties.”

“Uncertainties? What uncertainties? I know of none,—except indeed as to——”

Rolf stopped to peel off, and pull to pieces, some of the bark of the pine-trunk on which he was sitting. Erica looked wistfully at him; he saw it, and went on.

“It is often an uncertainty to me, Erica, after all that has happened, whether you mean to marry me at all. There are so many doubts, and so many considerations, and so many fears! I often think we shall never be any nearer than we are.”

“That is your sort of doubt and fear,” said Erica, smiling. “Who is there that entertains worse?”

“I do not want any rallying or joking, Erica. I am quite serious.”

“Seriously then,—are we not nearer than we were a year ago? We are betrothed; and I have shown you that I do believe we are to be married, if——”

“Ay, there. ‘If’ again.”

“If it shall please the Powers above us not to separate us, by death or otherwise.”

“Death! at our age! And separation! when

we have lived on the same farm for years! What have we to do with death and separation?"

Erica pointed to the child's grave, in rebuke of his rash words. She then quietly observed that they had enemies,—one deadly enemy not very far off, if nothing were to be said of any but human foes.—Rolf declared that he had rather have Hund for a declared enemy than for a companion. Erica understood this very well; but she could not forget that Hund wanted to be houseman in Rolf's stead, and that he desired to prevent their marriage.

"That is the very reason," said Rolf, "why we should marry as soon as we can. Why not fix the day, and engage the pastor while he is here?"

"Because it would hurt Peder's feelings. There will be no difficulty in sending for the pastor when everything is ready. But now, Rolf, that all may go well, do promise not to run into needless danger."

"According to you," said Rolf, smiling, "one can never get out of danger. Where is the use of taking care, if all the powers of earth and air are against us? You think me as helpless, under Nipen's breath, as the poor infant that put out into the fiord the other day in a tub."

"I am not speaking of Nipen now,—(not because I do not think of it;)—I am speaking of Hund. Do promise me not to go more than four miles down the fiord. After that, there is a long stretch of precipices, without a single dwelling. There is not a boat that could put off,—there is not an eye or an ear that could bear witness what

had become of you, if you and Hund should meet there."

"If Hund and I should meet there, I would bring him home, to settle what should become of him."

"And all the pirates? You would bring them all in your right hand and row home with your left! For shame, Rolf, to be such a boaster! Promise me not to go beyond the four miles."

"Indeed I can only promise to go where the shoal is. Four miles! Suppose you say four furlongs, love."

"I will engage to catch herrings within four furlongs."

"Pray take me with you; and then I will carry you four times four miles down, and show you what a shoal is. Really, love, I should like to prove to you how safe the fiord is to one who knows every nook and hiding-place from the entrance up. If fighting would not do, I could always hide."

"And would not Hund know where to look for you?"

"Not he. He was not brought up on the fiord, to know its ways, and its holes and corners: and I told him neither that nor anything else that I could keep from him; for I always mistrusted Hund.—Now, I will tell you, love. I will promise you something, because I do not wish to hurt you, as you sometimes hurt me with disregarding what I say,—with being afraid, in spite of all I can do to make you easy. I will promise you not to go farther down, while alone, than Vogel islet, unless it is quite certain that Hund and the pirates

are far enough off in another direction. I partly think as you do, and as Erlingsen does, that they meant to come for me the night you carried off their boat: so I will be on the watch, and go no farther than where they cannot hurt me."

"Then why say Vogel islet? It is out of all reasonable distance."

"Not to those who know the fiord as I do. I have my reasons, Erica, for fixing that distance and no other; and that far I intend to go, whether my friends think me able to take care of myself or not."

"At least," pleaded Erica, "let me go with you."

"Not for the world, my love." And Erica saw, by his look of horror at the idea of her going, that he felt anything but secure from the pirates. He took her hand, and kissed it again and again, as he said that there was plenty for that little hand to do at home, instead of pulling the oar in the hot sun. "I shall think of you all while I am fishing," he went on. "I shall fancy you making ready for the seater.* As you go towards Sulitelma any day now, you may hear the voices of a thousand waterfalls, calling upon the herdmen and

* Each Norway farm which is situated within a certain distance of the mountains has a mountain pasture, to which the herds and flocks are driven in early summer, and where they feed till the first frosts come on. The herdmen and dairy-women live on the mountain, beside their cattle, during this season, and enjoy the mode of life extremely. The mountain pasture belonging to a farm is called its Seater. The procession of herds and flocks, and herdmen and dairy women with their utensils, all winding up the mountain,— "going to the seater," is a pretty sight on an early summer's day.

maidens to come to the fresh pastures. How happy we shall be, Erica, when we once get to the seater !”

Erica sighed, and pressed her lover's hand as he held hers.

“While I am fishing,” he went on, “I shall fancy our young mistresses, and Stiorna and you, washing all your bowls in juniper-water, ready for your dairy. I know how the young ladies will contrive that all of my carving shall come under your hand. And I shall be back with my fish before you are gone, that I may walk beside your cart. I know just how far you will ride. When we get the first sight of the grass waving, as the wind sweeps over it on the mountain side, you will spring from the cart and walk with me all the rest of the way.”

“All this would be well,” said Erica, “if it were not for——”

“For what, love? For Nipen again! If you will not mind what I say about your silly fears, you shall hear from the pastor how wicked they are. I see him yonder, in the garden. I will call him——”

“No, no! I know all he has to say,” declared Erica.

But Rolf carried the case before M. Kollsen : and M. Kollsen, glad of every opportunity of discoursing on this subject, came and took Rolf's seat, and said all he could think of in contempt of the spirits of the region, till Erica's blood ran cold to hear him. It was not kind of Rolf to expose her to this : but Rolf had no fears himself, and was not aware how much she suffered under what the clergyman said. The lover stood by watching, and was so charmed with her gentle and submissive

countenance and manner, while she could not own herself convinced, that he almost admired her superstition, and forgave her doubts of his being able to take care of himself while his deadly enemy on earth might possibly be assisted by the offended powers of the air.

CHAPTER VII.

VOGEL ISLET.

WHO was ever happier than Rolf, when abroad in his skiff, on one of the most glorious days of the year? He found his angling tolerably successful near home; but the farther he went, the more the herrings abounded: and he therefore dropped down the fiord with the tide, fishing as he receded, till all home objects had disappeared. First, the farm-house, with its surrounding buildings, its green paddock, and shining white beach, was hidden behind the projecting rocks. Then Thor islet appeared to join with the nearest shore, from which its bushes of stunted birch seemed to spring. Then, as the skiff dropped lower and lower down, the interior mountains appeared to rise above the rocks which closed in the head of the fiord, and the snowy peak of Sulitelma stood up clear amidst the pale blue sky; the glaciers on its sides catching the sunlight on different points, and glittering so that the eye could scarcely endure to rest upon the mountain. When he came to the narrow part of the fiord, near the creek which had been the scene of Erica's exploit, Rolf laid aside his rod, with the bright hook that herrings so much admire, to guide his canoe through the currents caused by the approach of the rocks and contraction of the passage; and he then wished he had brought Erica

with him, so lovely was the scene. Every crevice of the rocks, even where there seemed to be no soil, was tufted with bushes, every twig of which was bursting into the greenest leaf, while here and there a clump of dark pines overhung some busy cataract, which, itself overshadowed, sent forth its little clouds of spray, dancing and glittering in the sun-light. A pair of fishing eagles were perched on a high ledge of rock, screaming to the echoes, so that the dash of the currents was lost in the din. Rolf did wish that Erica was here when he thought how the colour would have mounted into her cheek, and how her eye would have sparkled at such a scene.

Lower down, it was scarcely less beautiful. The waters spread out again, to a double width. The rocks were, or appeared to be, lower; and now and then, in some space between rock and rock, a strip of brilliant green meadow lay open to the sunshine; and there were large flocks of fieldfares, flying round and round, to exercise the newly-fledged young. There were a few habitations scattered along the margin of the fiord; and two or three boats might be seen far off, with diminutive figures of men drawing their nets.

“I am glad I brought my net too,” thought Rolf. “My rod has done good duty; but if I am coming upon a shoal, I will cast my net, and be home laden with fish, before they think of looking for me.”

Happy would it have been if Rolf had cast his net where others were content to fish, and had given up all idea of going farther than was necessary: but his boat was still dropping down towards the islet which he had fixed in his own

mind as the limit of his trip; and the long solitary reach of the fiord which now lay between him and it was tempting both to the eye and the mind. It is difficult to turn back from the first summer-day trip, in countries where summer is less beautiful than in Nordland; and on went Rolf, beyond the bounds of prudence, as many have done before him. He soon found himself in a still and somewhat dreary region, where there was no motion but of the sea-birds which were leading their broods down the shores of the fiords, and of the air which appeared to quiver before the eye, from the evaporation caused by the heat of the sun. More slowly went the canoe here, as if to suit the quietness of the scene, and leisurely and softly did Rolf cast his net: and then steadily did he draw it in, so rich in fish, that when they lay in the bottom of the boat, they at once sank it deeper in the water and checked its speed by their weight.

Rolf then rested awhile, and looked ahead for Vogel islet, thinking that he could not now be very far from it. There it lay looming in the heated atmosphere, spreading as if in the air, just above the surface of the water, to which it appeared joined in the middle by a dark stem, as if it grew like a huge sea-flower. There is no end to the strange appearances presented in northern climates by an atmosphere so different from our own. Rolf gazed and gazed, as the island grew more like itself on his approach; and he was so occupied with it as not to look about him as he ought to have done, at such a distance from home. He was roused at length by a shout, and looked towards the point from which it came; and there, in a little harbour of the fiord, a recess which now actually lay behind

him,—between him and home,—lay a vessel; and that vessel, he knew by a second glance, was the pirate-schooner.

Of the schooner itself he had no fear; for there was so little wind that it could not have come out in time to annoy him; but there was the schooner's boat, with five men in it,—four rowing and one steering,—already in full pursuit of him. He knew, by the general air and native dress of the man at the helm, that it was Hund; and he fancied he heard Hund's malicious voice in the shout which came rushing over the water from their boat to his. How fast they seemed to be coming! How the spray from their oars glittered in the sun; and how their wake lengthened with every stroke! No spectator from the shore (if there had been any) could have doubted that the boat was in pursuit of the skiff, and would snap it up presently. Rolf saw that he had five determined foes, gaining upon him every instant; and yet he was not alarmed. He had had his reasons for thinking himself safe near Vogel islet: and, calculating for a moment the time of the tide, he was quite at his ease. As he took his oars, he smiled at the hot haste of his pursuers, and at the thought of the amazement they would feel when he slipped through their fingers; and then he began to row.

Rolf did not over-heat himself with too much exertion. He permitted his foes to gain a little upon him, though he might have preserved the distance for as long as his strength could have held out against that of the four in the other boat. They ceased their shouting when they saw how quietly he took his danger. They really believed that he was not aware of being their object, and

hoped to seize him suddenly, before he had time to resist.

When very near the islet, however, Rolf became more active; and his skiff disappeared behind its southern point while the enemy's boat was still two furlongs off. The steersman looked for the reappearance of the canoe beyond the islet; but he looked in vain. He thought, and his companions agreed with him, that it was foolish of Rolf to land upon the islet, where they could lay hands on him in a moment; but they could only suppose he had done this, and prepared to do the same. They rowed quite round the islet; but, to their amazement, they could not only perceive no place to land at, but there was no trace of the canoe. It seemed to them as if those calm and clear waters had swallowed up the skiff and Rolf, in a few minutes after they had lost sight of him. Hund thought the case was accounted for, when he recalled Nipen's displeasure. A thrill ran through him as he said to himself that the spirits of the region had joined with him against Rolf, and swallowed up, almost before his eyes, the man he hated. He put his hands before his face, for a moment, while his comrades stared at him: then, thinking he must be under a delusion, he gazed earnestly over the waters, as far as he could see. They lay calm and bright; and there was certainly no kind of vessel on their surface, for miles round.

The rowers wondered, questioned, uttered shouts, spoke all together, and then looked at Hund in silence, struck by his countenance; and finished by rowing two or three times round the islet, slowly, and looking up its bare rocky sides, which rose like walls from the water; but nothing could

they see or hear. When tired of their fruitless search they returned to the schooner, ready to report to the master that the fiord was enchanted.

Meantime, Rolf had heard every plash of their oars, and every tone of their voices, as they rowed round his place of refuge. He was not on the islet, but in it. This was such an island as Swein, the sea-king of former days, took refuge in; and Rolf was only following his example. Long before, he had discovered a curious cleft in the rock, very narrow, and all but invisible at high water, even if a bush of dwarf ash and birch had not hung down over it. At high water, nothing larger than a bird could go in and out beneath the low arch; but there was a cavern within, whose sandy floor sloped up to some distance above high-water mark. In this cavern was Rolf. He had thrust his little skiff between the walls of rock, crushing in its sides as he did so. The bushes drooped behind him, hanging naturally over the entrance, as before. Rolf pulled up his broken vessel upon the little sandy beach within the cave; saved a pile of his fish, and returned a good many to the water; and then sat down upon the sea-weeds to listen. There was no light but a little which found its way through the bushy screen, and up from the green water; and the sounds,—the tones of the pirates' voices, and the splash of the waters against the rocky walls of his singular prison,—came deadened and changed to his ear. Yet he heard enough to be aware how long his enemies remained, and when they were really gone.

It was a prison indeed, as Rolf reflected when he looked upon his broken skiff. He could not imagine how he was to get away; for his friends would

certainly never think of coming to look for him here: but he put off the consideration of this point for the present, and turned away from the image of Erica's distress when he should fail to return. He amused himself now with imagining Hund's disappointment, and the reports which would arise from it: and he found this so very entertaining, that he laughed aloud: and then the echo of his laughter sounded so very merry, that it set him laughing again. This, in its turn, seemed to rouse the eider-ducks that thronged the island; and their clatter and commotion was so great overhead, that any spectator might have been excused for believing that Vogel islet was indeed bewitched.

CHAPTER VIII.

A SUMMER APARTMENT.

“HUMPH! How little did the rare old sea-king think,” said Rolf to himself, as he surveyed his cave, — “how little did Swein think, when he played this very trick, six hundred years ago, that it would save a poor farm-servant from being murdered, so many centuries after! Many thanks to my good grandmother for being so fond of that story! She taught it thoroughly to me before she died: and that is the reason of my being safe at this moment. I wish I had told the people at home of my having found this cave: for, as it is, they cannot but think me lost; and how Erica will bear it, I don’t know. And yet, if I had told them, Hund would have heard it; or, at least, Stiorna, and she would have managed to let him know. Perhaps it is best as it is, if only I can get back in time to save Erica’s heart from breaking. —But for her, I should not mind the rest being in a fright for a day or two. They are a little apt to fancy that the affairs of the farm go by nature, — that the fields and the eattle take care of themselves. They treat me liberally enough; but they are not fully aware of the value of a man like me; and now they will learn. They will hardly know how to make enough of me when I go back. — Oddo will be the first to see me. I think, how-

ever, I should let them hear my best song from a distance. Let me see,—which song shall it be? It must be one which will strike Peder; for he will be the first to hear, as Oddo always is to see. Some of them will think it is a spirit mocking, and some that it is my ghost: and my master and madame will take it to be nothing but my own self. And then, in the doubt among all these, my poor Erica will faint away: and while they are throwing water upon her face, and putting some camphorated brandy into her mouth, I shall quietly step in among them, and grasp Peder's arm, and pull Oddo's hair, to show that it is I myself; and when Erica opens her eyes, she shall see my face at its very merriest; so that she cannot possibly take me for a sad and solemn ghost. And the next thing will be ——”

He stopped with a start, as his eye fell upon his crushed boat, lying on its side, half in the water and half out.

“ Ah!” thought he, in a changed mood,—“ this is all very fine,—this planning how one pleasant thing will follow upon another; but I forgot the first thing of all. I must learn first how I am to get out.”

He turned his boat about and about, and shook his head over every bruise, hole, or crack that he found, till he finished with a nod of decision that nothing could be done with it.—He was a good swimmer; but the nearest point of the shore was so far off that it would be all he could do to reach it when the waters were in their most favourable state. At present, they were so chilled with the melted snows that were pouring down from every steep along the fiord, that he doubted the safety of

attempting to swim at all. What chance of release had he then?

If he could by any means climb upon the rocks, in whose recesses he was now hidden, he might possibly fall in with some fishing-boat which would fetch him off: but, besides that the pirates were more likely to see him than anybody else, he believed there was no way by which he could climb upon the islet. It had always been considered the exclusive property of the aquatic birds with which it swarmed, because its sides rose so abruptly from the water, so like the smooth stone walls of a lofty building, that there was no hold for foot or hand, and the summit seemed unattainable by anything that had not wings. Rolf remembered, however, having heard Peder say that when he was young, there might be seen hanging down one part of the precipice the remains of a birchen ladder, which must have been made and placed there by human hands. Rolf determined that he would try the point. He would wait till the tide was flowing in, as the waters from the open sea were somewhat less chilled than when returning from the head of the fiord:—he would take the waters at their warmest, and try and try again to make a footing upon the islet. Meantime, he would not trouble himself with thoughts of being a prisoner.

His cave was really a very pretty place. As its opening fronted the west, he found that even here there might be sunshine. The golden light which blesses the high and low places of the earth did not disdain to cheer and adorn even this humble chamber, which, at the bidding of nature, the waters had patiently scooped out of the hard rock. Some hours after darkness had settled down on the lands

of the tropics, and long after the stars had come out in the skies over English heads, this cave was at its brightest. As the sun drew to its setting, near the middle of the Nordland summer night, it levelled its golden rays through the cleft, and made the place far more brilliant than at noon. The projections of the rough rock caught the beam, during the few minutes that it stayed, and shone with a bright orange tint. The beach suddenly appeared of a more dazzling white, and the waters of a deeper green, while, by their motion, they cast quivering circles of reflected light upon the roof, which had before been invisible. Rolf took this brief opportunity to survey his abode carefully. He had supposed, from the pleasant freshness of the air, that the cave was lofty; and he now saw that the roof did indeed spring up to a vast height. He saw also that there was a great deal of drift-wood accumulated; and some of it thrown into such distant corners as to prove that the waves could dash up to a much higher water-line, in stormy weather, than he had supposed. No matter! He hoped to be gone before there were any more storms. Tired and sleepy as he was, so near midnight, he made an exertion, while there was plenty of light, to clear away the sea-weeds from a space on the sand where he must to-morrow make his fire, and broil his fish. The smell of the smallest quantity of burnt weed would be intolerable in so confined a place: so he cleared away every sprout of it, and laid some of the drift-wood on a spot above high-water mark; picking out the driest pieces of fire-wood he could find for kindling a flame.

When this was done, he could have found in his heart to pick up shells,—so various and beautiful

were those which strewed the floor of his cave: but the sunbeam was rapidly climbing the wall, and would presently be gone: so he let the shells lie till the next night (if he should still be here), and made haste to heap up a bed of fine dry sand in a corner; and here he lay down as the twilight darkened, and thought he had never rested on so soft a bed. He knew it was near high water; and he tried to keep awake, to ascertain how nearly the tide filled up the entrance: but he was too weary, and his couch was too comfortable for this. His eyes closed in spite of him; and he dreamed that he was broad awake watching the height of the tide. For this one night, he could rest without any very painful thoughts of poor Erica: for she was prepared for his remaining out till the middle of the next day, at least.

When he awoke in the morning, the scene was marvellously changed from that on which he had closed his eyes. His cave was so dim that he could scarcely distinguish its white floor from its rocky sides. The water was low, and the cleft therefore enlarged; so that he saw at once that now was the time for making his fire,—now when there was the freest access for the air. Yet he could not help pausing to admire what he saw. He could see now a long strip of the fiord,—a perspective of waters and of shores, ending in a lofty peak still capped with snow, and glittering in the sunlight. The whole landscape was bathed in light, as warm as noon; for, though it was only six in the morning, the sun had been up for several hours. As Rolf gazed, and reckoned up the sum of what he saw,—the many miles of water, and the long range of rocks, he felt, for a moment, as if not yet secure

from Hund,—as if he must be easily visible while he saw so much. But it was not so, and Rolf smiled at his own momentary fear when he remembered how, as a child, he had tried to count the stars he could see at once through a hole pricked by a needle in a piece of paper, and how, for that matter, all that we ever see is through the little circle of the pupil of the eye. He smiled when he considered that while, from his recess, he could see the united navy of Norway and Denmark, if anchored in the fiord, his enemy could not see even his habitation, otherwise than by peeping under the bushes which overhung the cleft; and this only at low water. So he began to sing, while rubbing together, with all his might, the dry sticks of fir with which his fire was to be kindled. First they smoked; and then, by a skilful breath of air, they blazed, and set fire to the heap; and by the time the herrings were ready for broiling, the cave was so filled with smoke that Rolf's singing was turned to coughing.

Some of the smoke hung in soot on the roof and walls of the cave, curling up so well at first that Rolf almost thought there must be some opening in the lofty roof which served as a chimney. But there was not: and some of the smoke came down again, issuing at last from the mouth of the cave. Rolf observed this; and, seeing the danger of his place of retreat being thus discovered, he made haste to finish his cookery, resolving that, if he had to remain here for any length of time, he would always make his fire in the night. He presently threw water over his burning brands, and hoped that nothing had been seen of the process of preparing his breakfast.

The smoke had been seen, however, and by several people; but in such a way as to lead to no discovery of the cave. From the schooner, Hund kept his eyes fixed on the islet, at every moment he had to spare. Either he was the murderer of his fellow-servant, or the islet was bewitched; and if Rolf was under the protection and favour of the powers of the region, he, Hund, was out of favour, and might expect bad consequences. Whichever might be the case, Hund was very uneasy; and he could think of nothing but the islet, and look no other way. His companions had at first joked him about his luck in getting rid of his enemies; but, being themselves superstitious, they caught the infection of his gravity, and watched the spot almost as carefully as he.

As their vessel lay higher up in the fiord than the islet, they were on the opposite side from the crevice, and could not see from whence the smoke issued. But they saw it in the form of a light cloud hanging over the place. Hund's eyes were fixed upon it, when one of his comrades touched him on the shoulder. Hund started.

"You see there," said the man, pointing.

"To be sure I do. What else was I looking at?"

"Well, what is it?" inquired the man. "Has your friend got a visitor,—come a great way this morning? They say the mountain-sprite travels in mist. If so, it is now going. See, there it sails off,—melts away. It is as like common smoke as anything that ever I saw. What say you to taking the boat, and trying again whether there is no place where your friend might not land, and be now making a fire among the birds' nests?"

“Nonsense!” cried Hund. “What became of the skiff, then?”

“True,” said the man; and, shaking his head, he passed on, and spoke to the master.

In his own secret mind, the master of the schooner did not quite like his present situation. The little harbour was well sheltered and hidden from the observation of the inhabitants of the upper part of the fiord: but, after hearing the words dropped by his crew, the master did not relish being stationed between the bewitched islet and the head of the fiord, where all the residents were, of course, enemies. He thought that it would be wiser to have a foe only on the one hand, and the open sea on the other, even at the sacrifice of the best anchorage. As there was now a light wind, enough to take his vessel down, he gave orders accordingly.

Slowly, and at some distance, the schooner passed the islet, and all on board crowded together to see what they could see. None,—not even the master with his glass,—saw anything remarkable: but all heard something. There was a faint muffled sound of knocks:—blows such as were never heard in a mere haunt of sea-birds. It was evident that the birds were disturbed by it. They rose and fell, made short flights and came back again, fluttered, and sometimes screamed so as to overpower all other sounds. But if they were quiet for a minute, the knock, knock, was heard again, with great regularity, and every knock went to Hund’s heart.

The fact was that, after breakfast, Rolf soon became tired of having nothing to do. The water was so very cold, that he deferred till noon the

attempt to swim round the islet. He once more examined his boat ; and, though the injuries done seemed irreparable, he thought he had better try to mend his little craft than do nothing. After collecting from the wood in the cave all the nails that happened to be sticking in it, and all the pieces that were sound enough to patch a boat with, he made a stone serve him for a hammer, straightened his nails upon another stone, and tried to fasten on a piece of wood over a hole. It was discouraging work enough ; but it helped to pass the hours till the restless waters should have reached their highest mark in the cave ; when he would know that it was noon, and time for his little expedition.

He sighed as he threw down his awkward new tools and pulled off his jacket, for his heart now began to grow very heavy. It was about the time when Erica would be beginning to look for his return ; and when or how he was ever to return he became less able to imagine, the more he thought about it. As he fancied Erica gazing down the fiord from the gallery, or stealing out, hour after hour, to look forth from the beach, and only to be disappointed every time, till she would be obliged to give him quite up, and yield to despair, Rolf shed tears. It was the first time for some years,—the first time since he had been a man ; and when he saw his own tears fall upon the sand, he was ashamed. He blushed, as if he had not been all alone, dashed away the drops, and threw himself into the water.

It was too cold by far for safe swimming. All the snows of Sulitelma could hardly have made the waters more chilly to the swimmer than they felt

at the first plunge. But Rolf would not retreat for this reason. He thought of the sunshine outside, and of the free open view he should enjoy, dived beneath the almost closed entrance, and came up on the other side. The first thing he saw was the schooner, now lying below his island; and the next thing was a small boat between him and it, evidently making towards him. When convinced that Hund was one of the three men in it, he saw that he must go back, or make haste to finish his expedition. He made haste, swam round so close as to touch the warm rock in many places, and could not discover, any more than before, any trace of a footing by which a man might climb to the summit. There was a crevice or two, however, from which vegetation hung, still left unsearched. He could not search them now; for he must make haste home.

The boat was indeed so near when he had reached the point he set out from, that he used every effort to conceal himself; and it seemed that he could only have escaped by the eyes of his enemies being fixed on the summit of the rock. When once more in the cave, he rather enjoyed hearing them come nearer and nearer, so that the bushes which hung down between him and them shook with the wind of their oars, and dipped into the waves. He laughed silently when he heard one of them swear that he would not leave the spot till he had seen something: upon which another rebuked his presumption. Presently, a voice which he knew to be Hund's, called upon his name, at first gently, and then more and more loudly, as if taking courage at not being answered.

"I will wait till he rounds the point," thought

Rolf, "and then give him such an answer as may send a guilty man away quicker than he came."

He waited till they were on the opposite side, so that his voice might appear to come from the summit of the islet, and then began with the melancholy sound used to lure the plover on the moors. The men in the boat instantly observed that this was the same sound used when Erlingsen's boat was spirited away from them. It was rather singular that Rolf and Oddo should have used the same sound; but they probably chose it as the most mournful they knew. Rolf, however, did not stop there. He moaned louder and louder, till the sound resembled the bellowing of a tormented spirit enclosed in the rock: and the consequence was, as he had said, that his enemies retreated faster than they came. Never had they rowed more vigorously than now, fetching a large circuit, to keep at a safe distance from the spot, as they passed westward.

For the next few days, Rolf kept a close watch upon the proceedings of the pirates, and saw enough of their thievery to be able to lay informations against them, if ever he should again make his way to a town or village, and see the face of a magistrate. He was glad of the interest and occupation thus afforded him,—of even this slight hope of being useful; for he saw no more probability than on the first day, of release from his prison. The worst of it was that the season for boating was nearly at an end. The inhabitants were day by day driving their cattle up the mountains, there to remain for the summer; and the heads of families remained in the farm-houses, almost alone, and little likely to put out so far into the fiord as to

pass near him. So poor Rolf could only catch fish for his support, swim round and round his prison, and venture a little farther on days when the water felt rather less cold than usual. To drive off thoughts of his poor distressed Erica, he sometimes hammered a little at his skiff; but it was too plain that no botching that he could perform in the cave would render the broken craft safe to float in.

One sunny day, when the tide was flowing in warmer than usual, Rolf amused himself with more evolutions in bathing than he had hitherto indulged in. He forgot his troubles and his foes in diving, floating, and swimming. As he dashed round a point of a rock, he saw something, and was certain he was seen. Hund appeared at least as much bewitched as the islet itself; for he could not keep away from it. He seemed irresistibly drawn to the scene of his guilt and terror. Here he was now, with one other man, in the schooner's smallest boat. Rolf had to determine in an instant what to do; for they were within a hundred yards, and Hund's starting eyes showed that he saw what he took for the ghost of his fellow-servant. Rolf raised himself as high as he could out of the water, throwing his arms up above his head, fixed his eyes on Hund, uttered a shrill cry, and dived, hoping to rise to the surface at some point out of sight. Hund looked no more. After one shriek of terror and remorse had burst from his white lips, he sank his head upon his knee, and let his comrade take all the trouble of rowing home again.

This vision decided Hund's proceedings. Half-crazed with remorse, he left the pirates that night. After long consideration where to go, he decided upon returning to Erlingsen's. He did not know

to what extent they suspected him : he was pretty sure that they held no proofs against him. Nowhere else could he be sure of honest work,—the first object with him now, in the midst of his remorse. He felt irresistibly drawn towards poor Erica, now that no rival was there ; and if, mixed with all these considerations, there were some thoughts of the situation of houseman being vacant, and needing much to be filled up, it is no wonder that such a mingling of motives took place in a mind so selfish as Hund's.

CHAPTER IX.

HUND'S REPORT.

HUND performed his journey by night,—a journey perfectly unlike any that was ever performed by night in England. He did not for a moment think of going by the fiord, short and easy as it would have been in comparison with the land road. He would rather have mounted all the steeps and crossed the snows of Sulitelma itself, many times over, than have put himself in the way a second time of such a vision as he had seen. Laboriously and diligently, therefore, he overcame the difficulties of the path, crossing ravines, wading through swamps, scaling rocks, leaping across watercourses, and only now and then throwing himself down on some tempting slope of grass, to wipe his brows, and, where opportunity offered, to moisten his parched throat with the wild strawberries which were fast ripening in the sheltered nooks of the hills. It was now so near midsummer, and the nights were so fast melting into the days, that Hund could at the latest scarcely see a star, though there was not a fleece of cloud in the whole circle of the heavens. While yet the sun was sparkling on the fiord, and glittering on every farm-house window that fronted the west, all around was as still as if the deepest darkness had settled down. The eagles were at rest on their rocky ledge, a thousand feet above the waters. The herons had left their stand

on their several promontories of the fiord, and the flapping of their wings overhead was no more heard. The raven was gone home; the cattle were all far away on the mountain pasture; the goats were hidden in the woods which yielded the tender shoots on which they subsisted. The round eyes of a white owl stared out upon him here and there, from under the eaves of a farm-house; and these seemed to be the only eyes besides his own that were open. Hund knew as he passed one dwelling after another,—knew as well as if he had looked in at the windows,—that the inhabitants were all asleep, even with the sunshine lying across their very faces.

Every few minutes he observed how his shadow lengthened, and he longed for the brief twilight which would now soon be coming on. Now, his shadow stretched quite across a narrow valley, as he took breath on a ridge crossed by the soft breeze. Then the shadow stood up against a precipice, taller than the tallest pine upon the steep. Then the yellow gleam grew fainter, the sparkles on the water went out, and he saw the large pale circle of the sun sink and sink into the waves, where the fiord spread out wide to the south-west. Even the weary spirit of this unhappy man seemed now to be pervaded with some of the repose which appeared to be shed down for the benefit of all that lived. He walked on and on; but he felt the grass softer under his feet,—the air cooler upon his brow; and he began to comfort himself with thinking that he had not murdered Rolf. He said to himself that he had not laid a finger on him, and that the skiff might have sunk exactly as it did, if he had been sitting at home, carving a bell-collar.

There could be no doubt that the skiff had been pulled down fathoms deep by a strong hand from below ; and if the spirits were angry with Rolf, that was no concern of Rolf's human enemies. — Thus Hund strove to comfort himself ; but it would not do. The more he tried to put away the thought, the more obstinately it returned, that he had been speeding on his way to injure Rolf when the strange disappearance took place ; and that he had long hated and envied his fellow-servant, however marvellously he had been prevented from capturing or slaying him. These thoughts had no comfort in them ; but better came after a time.

He had to pass very near M. Kollsen's abode ; and it crossed his mind that it would be a great relief to open his heart to a clergyman. He halted for a minute, in sight of the house, but presently went on, saying to himself that he could not say all to M. Kollsen, and would therefore say nothing. He should get a lecture against superstition, and hear hard words of the powers he dreaded ; and there would be no consolation in this. It was said that the Bishop of Tronyem was coming round this way soon, in his regular progress through his diocese, and everybody bore testimony to his gentleness and mercy. It would be best to wait for his coming. Then Hund began to calculate how soon he would come ; for aching hearts are impatient of relief ; and the thought how near midsummer was, made him look up into the sky, — that beautiful index of the seasons in a northern climate. There were a few extremely faint stars, — a very few, — for only the brightest could now show themselves in the sky where daylight lingered so as never quite to depart. A pale-green

hue remained where the sun had disappeared, and a deep red glow was even now beginning to kindle where he was soon to rise. Just here, Hund's ear caught some tones of the soft harp music which the winds make in their passage through a wood of pines; and there was a fragrance in the air from a new thatch of birch-bark just laid upon a neighbouring roof. This fragrance, that faint vibrating music, and the soft veiled light, were soothing; and when, besides, Hund pictured to himself his mind relieved by a confession to the good bishop,—perhaps cheered by words of pardon and of promise, the tears burst from his eyes, and the fever of his spirit was allayed.

Then up came the sun again, and the new thatch reeked in his beams, and the birds shook off sleep and plumed themselves, and the peak of Sulitelma blushed with the softest rose-colour, and the silvery fish leaped out of the water, and the blossoms in the gardens opened, though it was only an hour after midnight. Every creature except man seemed eager to make the most of the short summer season,—to waste none of its bright hours, which would be gone too soon:—every creature except man; but man must have rest, be the sun high or sunk beneath the horizon: so that Hund saw no face, and heard no human voice, before he found himself standing at the top of the steep rocky pathway which led down to Erlingsen's abode.

Hund might have known that he should find everything in a different state from that in which he had left the place: but yet he was rather surprised at the aspect of the farm. The stable-doors stood wide; and there was no trace of milk-pails. The hurdles of the fold were piled upon one another

in a corner of the yard. It was plain that herd, flock, and dairy-women were gone to the mountain: and, though Hund dreaded meeting Erica, it struck upon his heart to think that she was not here. He felt now how much it was for her sake that he had come back.

He half resolved to go away again: but from the gallery of the house some snow-white sheets were hanging to dry; and this showed that some neat and busy female hands were still here. Next, his eye fell upon the boat which lay gently rocking with the receding tide in its tiny cove; and he resolved to lie down in it and rest, while considering what to do next. He went down, stepping gently over the pebbles of the beach, lest his tread should reach and waken any ear through the open windows, lay down at the bottom of the boat, and, as might have been expected, fell asleep as readily as an infant in a cradle.

Of course he was discovered; and, of course, Oddo was the discoverer. Oddo was the first to come forth, to water the one horse that remained at the farm, and to give a turn and a shake to the two or three little cocks of hay which had been mown behind the house. His quick eye noted the deep marks of a man's feet in the sand and pebbles, below high-water mark, proving that some one had been on the premises during the night. He followed these marks to the boat, where he was amazed to find the enemy (as he called Hund) fast asleep. Oddo was in a great hurry to tell his grandfather (Erlingsen being on the mountain); but he thought it only proper caution to secure his prize from escaping in his absence.

He summoned his companion, the dog which had

warned him of many dangers abroad, and helped him faithfully with his work at home; and nothing could be clearer to Skorro than that he was to crouch on the thwarts of the boat, with his nose close to Hund's face, and not to let Hund stir till Oddo came back. Then Oddo ran, and wakened his grandfather, who made all haste to rise and dress. Erica now lived in Peder's house. She had taken her lover's place there, since his disappearance; as the old man must be taken care of, and the house kept; and her mistress thought the interest and occupation good for her. Hearing Oddo's story, she rushed out, and her voice was soon heard in passionate entreaty, above the bark of the dog, which was trying to prevent the prisoner from rising.

"Only tell me," Erica was heard to say, "only tell me where and how he died. I know he is dead,—I knew he would die; from that terrible night when we were betrothed. Tell me who did it,—for I am sure you know. Was it Nipen?—Yes, it was Nipen, whether it was done by wind or water, or human hands. But speak, and tell me where he is. O, Hund, speak! Say only where his body is, and I will try — I will try never to speak to you again—never to —"

Hund looked miserable; he moved his lips; but no sound was heard mingling with Erica's rapid speech.

Madame Erlingsen, who, with Orga, had by this time reached the spot, laid her hand on Erica's arm, to beg for a moment's silence, made Oddo call his dog out of the boat, and then spoke, in a severe tone, to Hund.

"Why do you shake your head, Hund, and

“speak no word? Say what you know, for the sake of those whom, we grievously suspect, you have deeply injured. Say what you know, Hund.”

“What I say is, that I do not know,” replied Hund, in a hoarse and agitated voice. “I only know that we live in an enchanted place, here by this fiord, and that the spirits try to make us answer for their doings. The very first night after I went forth, this very boat was spirited away from me, so that I could not come home. Nipen had a spite against me there,—to make you all suspect me. I declare to you that the boat was gone, in a twinkling, by magic, and I heard the cry of the spirit that took it.”

“What was the cry like?” asked Oddo, gravely.

“Where were you, that you were not spirited away with the boat?” asked his mistress.

“I was tumbled out upon the shore, I don’t know how,” declared Hund:—“found myself sprawling on a rock, while the creature’s cries brought my heart into my mouth as I lay.”

“Alone?—Were you alone?” asked his mistress.

“I had landed the pastor some hours before, madame; and I took nobody else with me, as Stiorna can tell; for she saw me go.”

“Stiorna is at the mountain,” observed madame, coolly.

“But Hund,” said Oddo, “how did Nipen take hold of you when it laid you sprawling on the rock? Neck and heels? Or did it bid you go and hearken whether the pirates were coming, and whip away the boat before you came back? Are you quite sure that you sprawled on the rock at all before you ran away from the horrible cry you

“speak of? Our rocks are very slippery when Nipen is at one's heels.”

Hund stared at Oddo, and his voice was yet hoarser when he said that he had long thought that boy was a favourite with Nipen; and he was sure of it now.

Erica had thrown herself down on the sand hiding her face on her hands, on the edge of the boat, as if in despair of her misery being attended to,—her questions answered. Old Peder stood beside her, stroking her hair tenderly; and he now spoke the things she could not.

“Attend to me, Hund,” said Peder, in the grave quiet tone which every one regarded. “Hear my words, and, for your own sake, answer them. We suspect you of being in communication with the pirates yonder: we suspect that you went to meet them when you refused to go hunting the bears. We know that you have long felt ill-will towards Rolf,—envy of him,—jealousy of him; — and —”

Here Erica looked up, pale as ashes, and said,

“Do not question him further. There is no truth in his answers. He spoke falsehood even now.”

Peder saw how Hund shrank under this, and thought the present the moment to get truth out of him, if he ever could speak it. He therefore went on to say—

“We suspect you of having done something to keep your rival out of the way, in order that you might obtain the house and situation,—and perhaps something else that you wish.”

“Have you killed him?” asked Erica, abruptly, looking full in his face.

“No,” returned Hund, firmly. From his manner everybody believed this much.

“Do you know that anybody else has killed him?”

“No.”

“Do you know whether he is alive or dead?”

To this Hund could, in the confusion of his ideas about Rolf's fate and condition, fairly say “No:” as also to the question, “Do you know where he is?”

Then they all cried out,

“Tell us what you do know about him.”

“Ay, there you come,” said Hund, resuming some courage, and putting on the appearance of more than he had. “You load me with foul accusations; and when you find yourselves all in the wrong, you alter your tone, and put yourselves under obligation to me for what I will tell. I will treat you better than you treat me; and I will tell you plainly why. I repent of my feelings towards my fellow-servant, now that evil has befallen him—”

“What? O what?” cried Erica.

“He was seen fishing on the fiord, in that poor little worn-out skiff. I myself saw him. And when I looked next for the skiff, it was gone,—it had disappeared.”

“And where were you?”

“Never mind where I was. I was not with him, but about my own business. And I tell you, I no more laid a finger on him or his skiff than any one of you.”

“Where was it?”

“Close by Vogel islet!”

Erica started, and, in one moment's flush of hope, told that Rolf had said, he should be safe at any time near Vogel islet. Hund caught at her

words so eagerly as to make a favourable impression on all, who saw, what was indeed the truth, that he would have been glad to know that Rolf was alive. Their manner so changed towards Hund, that if Stiorna had been there, she would have triumphed. But the more they considered the case, the more improbable it seemed that Rolf should have escaped drowning.

“Mother, what do you think?” whispered the gentle Orga.

“I think, my dear, that we shall never forgive ourselves for letting Rolf go out in that old skiff.”

“Then you think,—you feel quite sure,—mother, that Nipen had nothing to do with it.”

“I feel confident, my dear, that there is no such being as Nipen.”

“Even after all that has happened?—after this, following upon Oddo’s prank that night?”

“Even so, Orga. We suffer by our own carelessness and folly, my love: and it makes us neither wiser nor better to charge the consequences upon evil spirits;—to charge our good God with permitting revengeful beings to torment us, instead of learning from his chastisements to sin in the same way no more.”

“But, mother, if you are right, how very far wrong all these others are!”

“It is but little, my child, that the wisest of us know; but there is a whole eternity before us, every one, to grow wise in. Some,” and she looked towards Oddo, “may outgrow their mistakes here: and others,” looking at old Peder, “are travelling fast towards a place where everybody is wiser than years or education can make us here. Your father and I do wish, for Frolich and you, that you should

rest your reverence, your hopes and fears, on none but the good God. Do we not know that not even a sparrow falleth to the ground without his will?"

"Poor Erica would be less miserable if she could think so," sighed Orga. "She will die soon, if she goes on to suffer as she does. I wish the good bishop would come: for I do not think M. Kollsen gives her any comfort. Look now! what can she have to say to Hund?"

What Erica had to say to Hund was,

"I believe some of the things you have told. I believe that you did not lay hands on Rolf."

"Bless you! Bless you for that!" interrupted Hund, almost forgetting how far he really was guilty in the satisfaction of hearing these words from the lips that spoke them.

"Tell me then," proceeded Erica, "how you believe he really perished.—Do you fully believe he perished?"

"I believe," whispered Hund, "that the strong hand pulled him down——down to the bottom."

"I knew it," said Erica, turning away.

"Erica, — one word," exclaimed Hund. "I must stay here——I am very miserable, and I must stay here, and work, and work till I get some comfort. But you must tell me how you think of me—you must say that you do not hate me."——

"I do hate you," said Erica, with disgust, as her suspicions of his wanting to fill Rolf's place were renewed. "I mistrust you, Hund, more deeply than I can tell."

"Will no penitence change your feelings, Erica? I tell you I am as miserable as you."

"That is false, like everything else that you

say," cried Erica. "I wish you would go,—go and seek Rolf under the waters—"

Hund shuddered at the thought, as it recalled what he had seen and heard at the islet. Erica saw this, and sternly repeated,

"Go and bring back Rolf from the deeps; and then I will cease to hate you. Ah! I see the despair in your face. Such despair never came from any woman's words where there was not a bad conscience to back them."

Hund felt that this was true, and made no reply.

As Erica slowly returned into Peder's house, Oddo ran past, and was there before her. He closed the door when she had entered, put his hand within hers, and said,

"Did Rolf really tell you that he should be safe anywhere near Vogel islet?"

"Yes," sighed Erica,—*"safe from the pirates. That was his answer when I begged him not to go so far down the fiord: but Rolf always had an answer when one asked him not to go into danger. You see how it ended;—and he never would believe in that danger."*

"I shall never be happy again, if this is Nipen's doing," said Oddo. "But, Erica, you went one trip with me, and I know you are brave. Will you go another? Will you go to the islet, and see what Rolf could have meant about being safe there?"

Erica brightened for a moment; and perhaps would have agreed to go: but Peder came in; and Peder said he knew the islet well, and that it was universally considered that it was now inaccessible to human foot, and that that was the reason why the fowl flourished there as they did in no

other place. Erica must not be permitted to go so far down among the haunts of the pirates. Instead of this, her mistress had just decided that, as there were no present means of getting rid of Hund,—as indeed his depressed state of spirits seemed to give him some title to be received again,—and as Erica could not be expected to remain just now in his presence, she should set off immediately for the mountain, and request Erlingsen to come home. This was only hastening her departure by two or three days. At the seater she would find less to try her spirits than here: and, when Erlingsen came, he would, if he thought proper, have Hund carried before a magistrate; and would, at least, set such inquiries afloat through the whole region as would bring to light anything that might chance to be known of Rolf's fate.

Erica could not deny that this was the best plan that could be pursued, though she had no heart for going to the seater, any more than for doing anything else. Under Peder's urgency, however, she made up her bundle of clothes, took in her hand her lure,* with which to call home the cattle in the evenings, bade her mistress farewell privately, and stole away without Hund's knowledge, while Oddo was giving him meat and drink

* The lure is a wooden trumpet, nearly five feet long, made of two hollow pieces of birch-wood, bound together throughout the whole length with slips of willow. It is used to call the cattle together on a wide pasture; and is also carried by travelling parties, to save the risk of any one being lost in the wilds. Its notes, which may be heard to a great distance, are extremely harsh and discordant; having none of the musical tone of the Alp-horn—(the cow-horn used by the Swiss for the same purposes),—which sounds well at a distance.

within the house. Old Peder listened to her parting footsteps; and her mistress watched her up the first hill, thinking to herself how unlike this was to the usual cheerful departure to the mountain dairies. Never, indeed, had a heavier heart burdened the footsteps of the wayfarer about to climb the slopes of Sulitelma.

CHAPTER X.

SEEKING THE UPLANDS.

Now that the great occasion was come,—that brightest day of the year,—the day of going to the seater, how unlike was it to all that the lovers had imagined and planned! How unlike was the situation of the two! There was Rolf cooped up in a dim cave, his heart growing heavy as his ear grew weary of the incessant dash and echo of the waters! And here was Erica on the free mountain side, where all was silent except the occasional rattle of a brook over the stones, and the hum of a cloud of summer flies. The lovers were alike in their unhappiness only: and hardly in this, so much the most wretched of the two was Erica.

The sun was hot; and her path occasionally lay under rocks which reflected the heat upon the passenger. She did not heed this, for the aching of her heart. Then she had to pass through a swamp, whence issued a host of mosquitoes, to annoy any who intruded upon their domain. It just occurred to Erica that Rolf made her pass this place on horseback last year, well veiled, and completely defended from these stinging tormentors: but she did not heed them now. When, somewhat higher up, she saw in the lofty distance a sunny slope of long grass undulating in the wind, like the surface of a lake, tears sprang into her eyes: for Rolf had

said that when they came in sight of the waving pasture, she would alight, and walk the rest of the way with him. Instead of this, and instead of the gay procession from the farm, musical with the singing of boys and girls, the lowing of the cows, and the bleating of the kids, all rejoicing together at going to the mountain, here she was alone, carrying a widowed heart, and wandering with unwilling steps farther and farther from the spot where she had last seen Rolf.

She dashed the tears from her eyes, and looked behind her, at the entrance of a ravine which would hide from her the fiord and the dwelling she had left. Thor islet lay like a fragment of the leafy forest cast into the blue waters: but Vogel islet could not be seen. It was not too far down to be seen from an elevation like this: but it was hidden behind the promontories by which the fiord was contracted. Erica could see what she next looked for,—knowing, as she did, precisely where to look. She could see the two graves belonging to the household,—the two hillocks which were railed in behind the house: but she turned away sickening at the thought that Rolf could not even have a grave; that that poor consolation was denied her. She looked behind her no more; but made her way rapidly through the ravine; the more rapidly because she had seen a man ascending by the same path at no great distance, and she had little inclination to be joined by a party of wandering Laplanders, seeking a fresh pasture for their reindeer; still less by any neighbour from the fiord, who might think civility required that he should escort her to the seater. This wayfarer was walking at a pace so much faster than hers, that he

would soon pass; and she would hide among the rocks beside the tarn* at the head of the ravine till he had gone by.

It was refreshing to come out of the hot steep ravine upon the grass at the upper end of it. Such grass! A line of pathway was trodden in it straight upwards, by those who had before ascended the mountain: but Erica left this path, and turned to the right, to seek the tarn which there lay hidden among the rocks. The herbage was knee-deep, and gay with flowers,—with wild geranium, pansies, and especially with the yellow blossoms which give its peculiar hue and flavour to the Gammel cheese, and to the butter made in the mountain dairies of Norway. Through this rich pasture Erica waded till she reached the tarn which fed the stream that gambolled down the ravine. The death-cold unfathomed waters lay calm and still under the shelter of the rocks which nearly surrounded them. Even where crags did not rise abruptly from the water, huge blocks were scattered; masses which seemed to have lain so long as to have seen the springing herbage of a thousand summers.

In the shadow of one of these blocks, Erica sank down into the grass. There she, and her bundle, and her long lure were half-buried; and this, at last, felt something like rest. Here she would remain long enough to let the other wayfarer have a good start up the mountain; and by that time she should be cool and tranquillized:—yes, tranquillized; for here she could seek that peace which never failed when she sought it as Christians may. She hid her face in the fragrant grass, and did not

* Small lake upon a mountain.

look up again till the grief of her soul was stilled. —Then her eye and her heart were open to the beauty of the place which she had made her temple of worship ; and she gazed around till she saw something that surprised her. A reindeer stood on the ridge, his whole form, from his branching head to his slender legs, being clearly marked against the bright sky. He was not alone. He was the sentinel, set to watch on behalf of several companions,—two or three being perched on ledges of the rock, browsing,—one standing half buried in the herbage of the pasture, and one on the margin of the water, drinking as it would not have dreamed of doing if the wind had not been in the wrong quarter for letting him know how near the hidden Erica was.

This pretty sight was soon over. In a few moments, the whole company appeared to take flight all at once, without her having stirred a muscle. Away they went, with such speed and noiselessness that they appeared not to touch the ground. From point to point of the rock they sprang, and the last branchy head disappeared over the ridge, almost before Erica could stand upright, to see all she could of them.

She soon discovered the cause of their alarm. She thought it could not have been herself ; and it was not. The traveller who, she had hoped, was now some way up the mountain, was standing on the margin of the tarn, immediately opposite to her, so that the wind had carried the scent to the herd. The traveller saw her at the same moment that she perceived him ; but Erica did not discover this, and sank down again into the grass, hoping so to remain undisturbed. She could not thus ob-

serve what his proceedings were; but her ear soon informed her that he was close by. His feet were rustling in the grass.

She sat up, and took her bundle and her lure, believing now that she must accept the unwelcome civility of an escort for the whole of the rest of the way, and thinking that she might as well make haste, and get it over. The man, however, seemed in no hurry. Before she could rise, he took his seat on the huge stone beside her, crossed his arms, made no greeting, but looked her full in the face.

She did not know the face; nor was it like any that she had ever seen. There was such long hair, and so much beard, that the eyes seemed the only feature which made any distinct impression. Erica's heart now began to beat violently. Though wishing to be alone, she had not dreamed of being afraid till now: but now it occurred to her that she was seeing the rarest of sights,—one not seen twice in a century; no other than the mountain-demon. Sulitelma, as the highest mountain in Norway, was thought to be his favourite haunt; and considering his strange appearance, and his silence, it could hardly be other than himself.

The test would be whether he would speak first; a test which she resolved to try, though it was rather difficult to meet and return the stare of such a neighbour without speaking. She could not keep this up for more than a minute: so she sprang to her feet, rested her lure upon her shoulder, took her bundle in her hand, and began to wade back through the high grass to the pathway, almost expecting, when she thought of her mother's fate, to be seized by a strong hand, and cast into the unfathomable tarn, whose waters were said to well up

from the centre of the earth. Her companion, however, merely walked by her side. As he did not offer to carry her bundle, he could be no countryman of hers. There was not a peasant in Nordland who would not have had more courtesy.

They walked quietly on till the tarn was left some way behind. Erica found she was not to die that way. Presently after, she came in sight of a settlement of Lapps—a cluster of low and dirty tents, round which some tame reindeer were feeding. Erica was not sorry to see these; though no one knew better than she the helpless cowardice of these people; and it was not easy to say what assistance they could afford against the mountain-demon. Yet they were human beings, and would appear in answer to a cry. She involuntarily shifted her lure, to be ready to utter a call. The stranger stopped to look at the distant tents, and Erica went on, at the same pace. He presently overtook her, and pointed towards the Lapps with an inquiring look. Erica only nodded.

“Why you no speak?” growled the stranger, in broken language.

“Because I have nothing to say,” declared Erica, in the sudden vivacity inspired by the discovery that this was probably no demon. Her doubts were renewed, however, by the next question.

“Is the bishop coming?”

Now, none were supposed to have a deeper interest in the holy bishop's travels than the evil spirits of any region through which he was to pass.

“Yes, he is coming,” replied Erica. “Are you afraid of him?”

The stranger burst into a loud laugh at her question: and very like a mocking fiend he looked,

as his thick beard parted to show his wide mouth, with its two ranges of teeth. When he finished laughing, he said "No, no—we no fear bishop."

"We!" repeated Erica to herself. "He speaks for his tribe, as well as himself."

"We no fear bishop," said the stranger, still laughing. "You no fear——?" and he pointed to the long stretch of path,—the prodigious ascent before them.

Erica said there was nothing to fear on the mountain for those who did their duty to the powers, as it was her intention to do. Her first Gammel cheese was to be for him whose due it was; and it should be the best she could make.

This speech she thought would suit, whatever might be the nature of her companion. If it was the demon, she could do no more to please him than promise him his cheese.

Her companion seemed not to understand or attend to what she said. He again asked if she was not afraid to travel alone in so dreary a place, adding that if his countrywomen were to be overtaken by a stranger like him, on the wilds of a mountain, they would scream and fly;—all which he acted very vividly, by way of making out his imperfect speech, and trying her courage at the same time.

When Erica saw that she had no demon for a companion, but only a foreigner, she was so much relieved as not to be afraid at all. She said that nobody thought of being frightened in summer time in her country. Winter was the time for that. When the days were long, so that travellers knew their way, and when every body was abroad, so that you could not go far

without meeting a friend, there was nothing to fear.

“You go abroad to meet friends, and leave your enemy behind.”

At the moment, he turned to look back. Erica could not now help watching him, and she cast a glance homewards too. They were so high up the mountain that the fiord and its shores were in full view; and more;—for the river was seen in its windings from the very skirts of the mountain to the fiord, and the town of Saltdalen standing on its banks. In short, the whole landscape to the west lay before them, from Sulitelma to the point of the horizon where the islands and rocks melted into the sea.

The stranger had picked up an eagle’s feather in his walk; and he now pointed with it to the tiny cove in which Erlingsen’s farm might be seen, looking no bigger than an infant’s toy, and said,

“Do you leave an enemy there, or is Hund now your friend?”

“Hund is nobody’s friend, unless he happens to be yours,” Erica replied, perceiving at once that her companion belonged to the pirates. “Hund is everybody’s enemy; and, above all, he is an enemy to himself. He is a wretched man.”

“The bishop will cure that,” said the stranger. “He is coward enough to call in the bishop to cure all. When comes the bishop?”

“Next week.”

“What day, and what hour?”

Erica did not choose to gratify so close a curiosity as this. She did not reply; and while silent, was not sorry to hear the distant sound of cattle-bells;—and Erlingsen’s cattle-bells too. The

stranger did not seem to notice the sound, even though quickening his pace, to suit Erica's, who pressed on faster when she believed protection was at hand. And yet the next thing the stranger said brought her to a full stop.—He said he thought a part of Hund's business with the bishop would be to get him to disenchant the fiord, so that boats might not be spirited away almost before men's eyes; and that a rower and his skiff might not sink like lead one day, and the man may be heard the second day, and seen the third, so that there was no satisfactory knowledge as to whether he was really dead. Erica stopped, and her eager looks made the enquiry which her lips could not speak. Her eagerness put her companion on his guard, and he would explain no further than by saying that the fiord was certainly enchanted, and that strange tales were circulating all round its shores,—very striking to a stranger;—a stranger had nothing more to do with the wonders of a country than to listen to them. He wanted to turn the conversation back to Hund. Having found out that he was at Erlingsen's, he next tried to discover what he had said and done since his arrival. Erica told the little there was to tell,—that he seemed full of sorrow and remorse. She told this in hope of a further explanation about drowned men being seen alive: but the stranger stopped when the bells were heard again, and a woman's voice singing, nearer still. He complimented Erica on her courage, and turned to go back, the way he came.

“Stay,” said Erica. “Do come to the dairy, now you are so near.”

The man walked away rapidly.

“My master is here close at hand,—he will be

glad to see a stranger," she said, following him, with the feeling that her only chance of hearing something of Rolf was departing. The stranger did not turn, but only walked on faster, and with longer strides, down the slope.

The only thing now to be done was to run forwards and send a messenger after him. Erica forgot heat, weariness, and the safety of her property, and ran on towards the singing voice. In five minutes she found the singer, Frolich, lying along the ground and picking cloud-berries, with which she was filling her basket for supper.

"Where is Erlingsen?—quick—quick!" cried Erica.

"My father? You may just see him with your good eyes,—up there."

And Frolich pointed to a patch of verdure on a slope high up the mountain, where the gazer might just discern that there were hay-cocks standing, and two or three moving figures beside them.

"Stiorna is there to-day, besides Jan. They hope to finish this evening," said Frolich; "and so here I am, all alone: and I am glad you have come, to help me to have a good supper ready for them. Their hunger will beat all my berry-gathering."

"You are alone?" said Erica, discovering that it was well that the pirate had turned back when he did. "You alone, and gathering berries, instead of having an eye on the cattle! Who has an eye on the cattle?" *

* It is a popular belief in Norway that there is a race of fairies or magicians, living underground, who are very covetous of cattle; and that to gratify their taste for large herds and flocks, they help themselves with such as graze on the

“Why, no one,” answered Frolich. “Come now, do not tease me with bidding me remember the Bishop of Tronyem’s cattle. The underground people have something to do elsewhere to-day; they give no heed to us.”

“We must give heed to them, however,” said Erica. “Show me where the cattle are, and I will collect them, and have an eye on them till supper is ready.”

“You shall do no such thing, Erica. You shall lie down here and pick berries with me, and tell me the news. That will rest you and me at the same time; for I am as tired of being alone, as you can be of climbing the mountain.—But why are your hands empty? Who is to lend you clothes? And what will the cows say to your leaving your lure behind, when they know you like it so much better than Stiorna’s?”

Erica explained that her bundle and lure were lying on the grass, a little way below; and Frolich sprang to her feet, saying that she would fetch them presently. Erica stopped her, and told her she must not go: nobody should go but herself. She could not answer to Erlingsen for letting one

mountains; making dwarfs of them to enable them to enter crevices of the ground, in order to descend to the subterranean pastures. This practice may be defeated, as the Norwegian herdsman believes, by his keeping his eye constantly on the cattle.

A certain bishop of Tronyem lost his cattle by the herdsmen having looked away from them, beguiled by a spirit in the shape of a noble elk. The herdsmen, looking towards their charge again, saw them reduced to the size of mice, just vanishing through a crevice in the hill-side. Hence the Norwegian proverb used to warn any one to look after his property, “Remember the Bishop of Tronyem’s cattle!”

of his children follow the steps of a pirate, who might return at any moment.

Frolich had no longer any wish to go. She started off towards the sleeping-shed, and never stopped till she had entered it, and driven a provision-chest against the door, leaving Erica far behind.

Erica, indeed, was in no hurry to follow. She returned for her bundle and lure ; and then, uneasy about the cattle being left without an eye upon them, and thus confided to the negligence of the underground people, she proceeded to an eminence where two or three of her cows were grazing, and there sounded her lure. She put her whole strength to it, in hope that others, besides the cattle, might appear in answer ; for she was really anxious to see her master.

The peculiar and far from musical sounds did spread wide over the pastures, and up the slopes, and through the distant woods, so that the cattle of another seater stood to listen, and her own cows began to move,—leaving the sweetest tufts of grass, and rising up from their couches in the richest herbage, to converge towards the point whence she called. The far-off herdsman observed to his fellow that there was a new call among the pastures ; and Erlingsen, on the upland, desired Jan and Stiorna to finish cocking the hay, and began his descent to his seater, to learn whether Erica had brought any news from home.

Long before he could appear, Frolich stole out trembling, and looking round her at every step. When she saw Erica, she flew over the grass, and threw herself down in it at Erica's feet.

“Where is he?” she whispered. “Has he come back?”

“I have not seen him. I dare say he is far off by this time at the Black Tarn, where I met with him.”

“The Black Tarn! And do you mean that—no, you cannot mean that you came all the way together from the Black Tarn hither. Did you run? Did you fly? Did you shriek? O, what did you do?—with a pirate at your heels!”

“By my side,” said Erica. “We walked and talked.”

“With a pirate! But how did you know it was a pirate? Did he tell you so?”

“No: and at first I thought,” and she sank her voice into a reverential whisper, — “I thought for some time it was the demon of this place. When I found it was only a pirate, I did not mind.”

“Only a pirate! Did not mind!” exclaimed Frolich. “You are the strangest girl! You are the most perverse creature! You think nothing of a pirate walking at your elbow for miles, and you would make a slave of yourself and me about these underground people, that my father laughs at, and that nobody ever saw.—Ah! you say nothing aloud; but I know you are saying in your own mind ‘Remember the Bishop of Tronyem’s cattle.’”

“You want news,” said Erica, avoiding, as usual, all conversation about her superstitions. “How will it please you that the bishop is coming?”

“Very much, if we had any chance of seeing him. Very much, whether we see him or not, if he can give any help,—any advice . . . My poor Erica, I do not like to ask; but you have had no good news, I fear.”

Erica shook her head.

“I saw that in your face, in a moment. Do not speak about it till you tell my father. He may help you—I cannot: so do not tell me any thing.”

Erica was glad to take her at her word. She kissed Frolich’s hand, which lay on her knee, in token of thanks, and then inquired whether any gammel cheese was made yet.

“No,” said Frolich, inwardly sighing for news. “We have the whey; but not sweet cream enough till after this evening’s milking. So you are just in time.”

Erica was glad, as she could not otherwise have been sure of the demon having his due.

“There is your father,” said Erica. “Now do go and gather more berries, Frolich. There are not half enough; and you cannot be afraid of the pirate, with your father within call. Now, do go.”

“You want me not to hear what you have to tell my father,” said Frolich, unwilling to depart.

“That is very true. I shall tell him nothing till you are out of hearing. He can repeat to you what he pleases afterwards: and he will indulge you all the more for your giving him a good supper.”

“So he will: and I will fill his cup myself,” observed Frolich. “He says the corn-brandy is uncommonly good: and I will fill his cup till it will not hold another drop.”

“You will not reach his heart that way, Frolich. He knows to a drop what his quantity is; and there he stops.”

“I know where there are some manyberries*”

* The Moltebæer, or Manyberries, so called from its

ripe," said Frolich; "and he likes them above all berries. They lie this way, at the edge of the swamp, where the pirate will never think of coming."

And off she went, as Erica rose from the grass to curtsy to Erlingsen on his approach.

clustered appearance. It is a delicious fruit, amber-coloured when ripe, and growing in marshy ground.

CHAPTER XI.

DAIRY-MAIDS' TALK.

It may be supposed that Erlingsen was anxious to be at home, when he had heard Erica's story. He was not to be detained by any promise of berries and cream for supper. He put away the thought even of his hay, yet unfinished on the upland, and would hear nothing that Frolich had to say of his fatigue at the end of a long working day. He took some provision with him, drank off a glass of corn-brandy, kissed Frolich, promised to send news, and, if possible, more helping hands, and set off, at a good pace, down the mountain.

The party he left behind was but a dull one. When Jan came in to supper, he became angry that he was left to get in the hay alone. Even Stiorna could not help him to-morrow; for the cheese-making had already been put off too long while waiting for Erica's arrival; and it must now be delayed no longer. It was true, some one was to be sent from below; but such an one could not arrive before the next evening; and Jan would meanwhile have a long day alone, instead of having, as hitherto, his master for a comrade.—Stiorna, for her part, was offended at the wish, openly expressed by all, that Hund might not be the person sent. She was sure he was the only proper person, but

she saw that he would meet with no welcome, except from her.

Scarcely a word was spoken (though the mountain-dairies have the reputation of being the merriest places in the world, till Erica and Frolich were about their cheese-making the next morning. Erica had rather have kept the cattle: but Frolich so earnestly begged that she would let Stiorna do that, as she could not destroy the cattle in her ill-humour, while she might easily spoil the cheese, that Erica put away her knitting, tied on her apron, tucked up her sleeves, and prepared for the great work.

“There! Let her go!” cried Frolich, looking after Stiorna, as she walked away slowly, trailing her lure after her. “She may knit all her ill-humour into her stocking, if she likes, as Hund is to wear it; and that is better than putting it into our cheese. Erica,” said the kind-hearted girl, “you are worth a hundred of her. What has she to disturb her, in comparison with you?—and yet you do just what I ask you, and work at our business, as if nothing was the matter. If you chose to cry all day on the two graves down there at home, nobody could think it unreasonable.”

Erica was washing the bowls and cheese-moulds in juniper water at this moment; and her tears streamed down upon them at Frolich's kind words.

“We had better not talk about such things, dear,” said she, as soon as she could speak.

“Nay, now, I think it is the best thing we can do, Erica. Here, pour me this cream into the pan over the fire, and I will stir, while you strain some more whey. My back is towards you, and I

cannot see you ; and you can cry as you like, while I tell you all I think."

Erica found that this free leave to cry unseen was a great help towards stopping her tears ; and she ceased weeping entirely while listening to all that Frolich had to say in favour of Rolf being still alive and safe. It was no great deal that could be said : only that Hund's news was more likely to be false than true, and that there was no other evidence of any accident having happened.

"My dear!" exclaimed Erica, "where is he now, then,—why is he not here? O, Frolich! I can hardly wonder that we are punished when I think of our presumption. When we were talking beside those graves on the day of Ulla's funeral, he laughed at me for even speaking of death and separation. 'What! at our age!' he said. 'Death at our age,—and separation!'—and that with Henrica's grave before our eyes!"

"Then perhaps this will prove to be a short and gentle separation, to teach him to speak more humbly. There is no being in the universe that would send death to punish light gay words, spoken from a joyful heart. If there were, I and many others should have been in our graves long since. Why, Erica! this is even a worse reason than Hund's word.—Now just tell me, Erica, would you believe anything else that Hund said?"

"In a common way, perhaps not: but you cannot think what a changed man he is, Frolich. He is so humbled, so melancholy, so awe-struck, that he is not like the same man."

"He may not be the better for that. He was more frightened than anybody at the moment the owl cried, on your betrothment night, when you

fancied that Nipen had carried off Oddo. Yet never did I see Hund more malicious than he was half an hour afterwards. I doubt whether any such fright would make a liar into a truthful man, in a moment."

Erica now remembered and told the falsehood of Hund about what he was doing when the boat was spirited away:—a falsehood told in the very midst of the humiliation and remorse she had described.

"Why there now!" exclaimed Frolich, ceasing her stirring for a moment to look round; "what a capital story that is! and how few people know it! and how neatly you catch him in his fib! And why should not something like it be happening now with Rolf? Rolf knows all the ins and outs of the fiord: and if he has been playing bo-peep with his enemies among the islands, and frightening Hund (as he well knows how), is it not the most natural thing in the world that Hund should come scampering home, and get his place, and say that he is lost, while waiting to see whether he is or not?—O dear!" she exclaimed after a pause, during which Erica did not attempt to speak, "I know what I wish."

"You wish something kind, dear, I am sure," said Erica, with a deep sigh.

"We have so many,—so very many nice, useful things,—we can go up the mountains and sail away over the seas,—and look far abroad into the sky,—I only wish we could do one little thing more. I really think, having so many things, we might have had just one little thing more given us;—and that is wings. I grudge them to yonder screaming eagles when I want them so much."

“ My dear child, what strange things you say ! ”

“ I do so very much want to fly abroad, just for once, over the fiord. If I could but look down into every nook and cove between Thor islet and the sea, I would not be long in bringing you news. If I did not see Rolf, I would tell you plainly. Really, at such times, it seems very odd that we have not wings.”

“ Perhaps the time may come, dear.”

“ I can never want them so much again.”

“ My dear, you cannot want them as I do, if I dared to say such bold things as you do. You are not weary of the world, Frolich.”

“ What ! this beautiful world ? Are you weary of it all, Erica ? ”

“ Yes, dear.”

“ What ! of the airy mountains, and the silent forests, and the lonely lakes, and the blue glaciers, with flowers fringing them ! Are you quite weary of all these ? ”

“ O, that I had wings like a dove ! Then would I flee away, and be at rest.” Erica hardly murmured these words ; but Frolich caught them.

“ Do you know,” said she, softly, after a pause, “ I doubt whether we can find rest by going to any place, in this world or out of it, unless —— if ——. The truth is, Erica, I know my father and mother think that people who are afraid of selfish and revengeful spirits, such as demons and Nipen, can never have any peace of mind. Really religious people have their way straight before them ;— they have only to do right, and God is their friend, and they can bear everything, and need fear nothing. But the people about us are always in a

fright about some selfish being or another not being properly humoured, and so being displeased. I would not be in such bondage, Erica—no, not for the wings I was longing for just now. I should be freer if I were rooted like a tree, and without superstition, than if I had the wings of an eagle, with a belief in selfish demons.”

“Let us talk of something else,” said Erica, who was at the very moment considering where the mountain-demon would best like to have his gammel cheese laid. “What is the quality of the cream, Frolich? Is it as good as it ought to be?”

“Stiorna would say that the demon will smack his lips over it. Come and taste.”

“Do not speak so, dear.”

“I was only quoting Stiorna ——.”

“What are you saying about me?” inquired Stiorna, appearing at the door. “Only talking about the cream and the cheese? Are you sure of that? Bless me! what a smell of the yellow flowers! It will be a prime cheese.”

“How can you leave the cattle, Stiorna?” cried Erica. “If they are all gone when you get back ——.”

“Well, come, then, and see the sight. I get scolded either way, always. You would have scolded me finely to-night if I had not called you to see the sight.—”

“What sight?”

“Why, there is such a procession of boats on the fiord, that you would suppose there were three weddings happening at once.”

“What can we do?” exclaimed Frolich, dole-

fully looking at the cream, which had reached such a point as that the stirring could not cease for a minute without risk of spoiling the cheese.

Erica took the long wooden spoon from Frolich's hand, and bade her run and see where the bishop (for no doubt it was the bishop) was going to land. The cream should not spoil while she was absent.

Frolich bounded away over the grass, declaring that if it was the bishop going to her father's, she could not possibly stay on the mountain for all the cheeses in Nordland.—Erica remained alone, patiently stirring the cream, and hardly heeding the heat of the fire, while planning how the bishop would be told her story, and how he would examine Hund, and perhaps be able to give some news of the pirates, and certainly be ready with his advice. Some degree of hope arose within her as she thought of the esteem in which all Norway held the wisdom and kindness of the bishop of Tronyem: and then again she felt it hard to be absent during the visit of the only person to whom she looked for comfort.

Frolich returned after a long while, to defer her hopes a little. The boats had all drawn to shore on the northern side of the fiord, where, no doubt, the bishop had a visit to pay before proceeding to Erlingsen's. The cheese-making might yet be done in time, even if Frolich should be sent for home, to see and be seen by the good bishop.

CHAPTER XII.

PEDER ABROAD.

THE day after Erica's departure to the dairy, Peder was sitting alone in his house, weaving a frail-basket. Sometimes he sighed to think how empty and silent the house appeared to what he had ever known it before. Ulla's wheel stood in the corner, and was now never to be heard, any more than her feeble, aged voice, which had sung ballads to the last. Erica's light, active step was gone for the present; and would it ever again be as light and active as it had been? Rolf's hearty laugh was silent; perhaps for ever. Oddo was an inmate still, but Oddo was much altered of late: and who could wonder? Though the boy was strangely unbelieving about some things, he could not but feel how wonders and misfortunes had crowded upon one another since the night of his defiance of Nipen.

From the hour of Hund's return, the boy had hardly been heard to speak. All these thoughts were too melancholy for old Peder; and, to break the silence, he began to sing as he wove his basket.

He had nearly got through a ballad of a hundred and five stanzas, when he heard a footstep on the floor.

"Oddo, my boy," said he, "surely you are in early. Can it be dinner time yet?"

"No, not this hour," replied Oddo, in a low

voice, which sank to a whisper as he said, "I have left Hund laying the troughs to water the meadow;* and if he misses me I don't care. I could not stay; I could not help coming; and if he kills me for telling you, he may; for tell you I must."

And Oddo went to close and fasten the door; and then he sat down on the ground, rested his arms on his grandfather's knees, and told his story in such a low tone that no "little bird" under the eaves could "carry the matter."

"O grandfather, what a mind that fellow has! He will go crazy with horror soon. I am not sure that he is not crazy now."

"He has murdered Rolf, has he?"

"I can't be sure: but the oddest thing is that he mixes up wolves with his rambling talk. Rolf can hardly have met with mischief from any wolf at this season."

"No, boy; not Rolf. But did not Hund speak of orphan children, and how wolves have been known to devour them when snow was on the ground?"

"Why, yes," said Oddo, surprised at such a guess.

"There was a reason for Hund's talking so of wolves, my dear. Tell me quick what he said of Rolf; and what made him say anything to you,—to an inquisitive boy like you."

* The strips of meadow which lie between high rocks in Norway would be parched by the reflection of the long summer sunshine, and unproductive, if the inhabitants did not use great industry in the irrigation of their lands. They conduct water from the spring heads, by means of hollow trunks of trees laid end to end, through which water flows in the directions in which it is wanted, sometimes for an extent of fifty miles from one spring.

“He is like one bewitched that cannot hold his tongue. While I was bringing the troughs, one by one, for him to lay, where the meadow was driest, he still kept muttering and muttering to himself. As often as I came within six yards of him, I heard him mutter, mutter. Then, when I helped him to lay the troughs, he began to talk to me. I was not in the mind to make him many answers; but on he went, just the same as if I had asked him a hundred questions.”

“It was such an opportunity for a curious boy, that I wonder you did not.”

“Perhaps I might, if he had stopped long enough. But if he stopped for a moment to wipe his brows (for he was all trembling with the heat), he began again before I could well speak. He asked me whether I had ever heard that drowned men could show their heads above water, and stare with their eyes, and throw their arms about, a whole day,—two days, after they were drowned.”

“Ay! Indeed! Did he ask that?”

“Yes, and several other things. He asked whether I had ever heard that the islets in the fiord were so many prison houses.”

“And what did you say?”

“I wanted him to explain: so I said they were prison-houses to the eider-ducks when they were sitting, for they never stir a yard from their nests. But he did not heed a word I spoke. He went on about drowned men being kept prisoners in the islets, moaning because they can't get out. And he says they will knock, knock, as if they could cleave the thick hard rock.”

“What do you think of all this, my boy?”

“Why, when I said I had not heard a word of

any such thing, even from my grandmother or Erica, he declared he had heard the moans himself,—moaning and crying; but then he mixed up something about the barking of wolves that made confusion in the story. Though he had been hot just before, there he stood shivering, as if it was winter, as he stood in the broiling sun. Then I asked him if he had seen dead men swim and stare, as he said he had heard them moan and cry.”

“And what did he say then?”

“He started bolt upright, as if I had been picking his pocket. He was in a passion for a minute, I know, if ever he was in his life. Then he tried to laugh as he said what a lot of new stories,—stories of spirits, such stories as people love,—he should have to carry home to the north, whenever he went back to his own place.”

“In the north,—his own place in the north! He wanted to mislead you there, boy. Hund was born some way to the south.”

“No, was he really? how is one to believe a word he says, except when he speaks as if he was in his sleep,—straight out from his conscience, I suppose? He began to talk about the bishop next, wanting to know when I thought he would come, and whether he was apt to hold private talk with every sort of person at the houses he stayed at.”

“How did you answer him? You know nothing about the bishop’s visits.”

“So I told him: but, to try him, I said I knew one thing,—that a quantity of fresh fish would be wanted when the bishop comes with his train: and I asked him whether he would go fishing with me as soon as we should hear that the bishop was drawing near.”

“He would not agree to that, I fancy.”

“He asked how far out I thought of going. Of course, I said to Vogel islet,—at least as far as Vogel islet. Do you know, grandfather, I thought he would have knocked me down at the word. He muttered something, I could not hear what, to get off. By that time we were laying the last trough. I asked him to go for some more; and the minute he was out of sight I scampered here. Now, what sort of a mind do you think this fellow has?”

“Not an easy one, it is plain. It is too clear also that he thinks Rolf is drowned.”

“But do you think so, grandfather?”

“Do you think so, grandson?”

“Not a bit of it. Depend upon it, Rolf is all alive, if he is swimming and staring, and throwing his arms about in the water. I think I see him now. And I will see him, if he is to be seen alive, or dead.”

“And pray, how?”

“I ought to have said if you will help me. You say sometimes, grandfather, that you can pull a good stroke with the oar still: and I can steer as well as our master himself: and the fiord never was stiller than it is to-day. Think what it would be to bring home Rolf, or some good news of him! We would have a race up to the seater afterwards to see who could be the first to tell Erica.”

“Gently, gently, boy! What is Rolf about not to come home, if he is alive?”

“That we shall learn from him. Did you hear that he told Erica he should go as far as Vogel islet, dropping something about being safe there from pirates and everything?”

Peder really thought there was something in this.

He sent off Oddo to his work in the little meadow, and himself sought out Madame Erlingsen, who having less belief in spirits and enchantments than Peder, was in proportion more struck with the necessity of seeing whether there was any meaning in Hund's revelations, lest Rolf should be perishing for want of help. The story of his disappearance had spread through the whole region; and there was not a fisherman on the fiord who had not, by this time, given an opinion as to how he was drowned. But Madame was well aware that, if he were only wrecked, there was no sign that he could make that would not terrify the superstitious minds of the neighbours, and make them keep aloof, instead of helping him. In addition to all this, it was doubtful whether his signals would be seen by anybody, at a season when every one who could be spared was gone up to the dairies.

As soon as Hund was gone out after dinner, the old man and his grandson put off in the boat carrying a note from Madame Erlingsen to her neighbours along the fiord, requesting the assistance of one or two rowers on an occasion which might prove one of life and death. The neighbours were obliging. The Holbergs sent a stout farm-servant with directions to call at a cousin's, lower down, for a boatman; so that the boat was soon in fast career down the fiord,—Oddo full of expectation, and of pride in commanding such an expedition; and Peder being relieved from all necessity of rowing more than he liked.

Oddo had found occasionally the truth of a common proverb:—he had easily brought his master's horses to the water but could not make them drink. He now found that he had easily got rowers into

the boat, but that it was impossible to make them row, beyond a certain point. He had used as much discretion as Peder himself about not revealing the precise place of their destination: and when Vogel islet came in sight, the two helpers at once gave him hints to steer so as to keep as near the shore, and as far from the island, as possible. Oddo gravely steered for the island, notwithstanding. When the men saw that this was his resolution, they shipped their oars, and refused to strike another stroke, unless one of them might steer. That island had a bad reputation: it was bewitched or haunted; and in that direction the men would not go. They were willing to do all they could to oblige: they would row twenty miles without resting, with pleasure: but they would not brave Nipen, nor any other demon, for any consideration.

“How far off is it, Oddo?” asked Peder.

“Two miles, grandfather. Can you and I manage it by ourselves, think you?”

“Ay, surely: if we can land these friends of ours. They will wait ashore till we call for them again.”

“I will leave you my supper, if you will wait for us here, on this head-land,” said Oddo to the men.

The men could make no other objection than that they were certain the boat would never return. They were very civil,—would not accept Oddo’s supper on any account,—would remain on the watch,—wished their friends would be persuaded; and, when they found all persuasion in vain, declared they would bear testimony to Erica, and, as long as they should live, to the bravery of the old

man and boy who thus threw away their lives in search of a comrade who had fallen a victim to Nipen.

Amidst these friendly words, the old man and his grandson put off once more alone, making straight for the islet. Of the two Peder was the greater hero, for he saw the most ground for fear.

"Promise me, Oddo," said he, "not to take advantage of my not seeing. As sure as you observe anything strange, tell me exactly what you see."

"I will, grandfather. There is nothing yet but what is so beautiful that I could not, for the life of me, find out anything to be afraid of. The water is as green as our best pasture, as it washes up against the grey rock. And that grey rock is all crested and tufted with green again, wherever a bush can spring. It is all alive with sea-birds, as white as snow, as they wheel above it in the sun."

"'Tis the very place," said Peder, putting new strength into his old arm. Oddo rowed stoutly too, for some way: and then he stopped to ask on what side the remains of a birch ladder used to hang down, as Peder had often told him.

"On the north side: but there is no use in looking for that, my boy. That birch ladder must have rotted away, with frost and wet, long and long ago."

"It is likely," said Oddo: "but, thinking that some man must have put it there, I should like to see whether it really is impossible for one with a strong hand and light foot to mount this wall. I brought our longest boat-hook, on purpose to try. Where a ladder hung before, a foot must have

climbed : and if I mount, Rolf may have mounted before me."

It chilled Peder's heart to remember the aspect of the precipice which his boy talked of climbing : but he said nothing, feeling that it would be in vain. This forbearance touched Oddo's feelings.

"I will run into no folly, trust me," said he. "I do not forget that you depend on me for getting home ; and that the truth, about Nipen and such things, depends, for an age to come, on our being seen at home again safe. But I have a pretty clear notion that Rolf is somewhere on the top there."

"Suppose you call him, then."

Oddo had much rather catch him. He pictured to himself the pride and pleasure of mastering the ascent ; the delight of surprising Rolf asleep in his solitude, and the fun of standing over him to waken him, and witness his surprise. He could not give up the attempt to scale the rock : but he would do it very cautiously.

Slowly and watchfully they passed round the islet, Oddo seeking with his eye any ledge of the rock on which he might mount. Pulling off his shoes, that his bare feet might have the better hold, and stripping off almost all his clothes, for lightness in climbing and perhaps swimming, he clambered up to more than one promising spot, and then, finding that further progress was impossible, had to come down again. At last, seeing a narrow chasm filled with leafy shrubs, he determined to try how high he could reach by means of these. He swung himself up by means of a bush which grew downwards, having its roots firmly fixed in a crevice of the rock. This gave him hold of another, which

brought him in reach of a third ; so that, making his way like a squirrel or a monkey, he found himself hanging at such a height, that it seemed easier to go on than to turn back. For some time after leaving his grandfather, he had spoken to him, as an assurance of his safety. When too far off to speak, he had sung aloud, to save the old man from fears ; and now that he did not feel at all sure whether he should ever get up or down, he began to whistle cheerily. He was pleased to hear it answered from the boat. The thought of the old man sitting there alone, and his return wholly depending upon the safety of his companion, animated Oddo afresh to find a way up the rock. It looked to him as like a wall as any other rock about the islet. There was no footing where he was looking ;—that was certain. So he advanced farther into the chasm, where the rocks so nearly met that a giant's arm might have touched the opposite wall. Here there was promise of release from his dangerous situation. At the end of a ledge, he saw something like poles hanging on the rock,—some work of human hands, certainly. Having scrambled towards them, he found the remains of a ladder, made of birch poles, fastened together with thongs of leather. This ladder had once, no doubt, hung from top to bottom of the chasm ; and its lower part, now gone, was that ladder of which Peder had often spoken as a proof that men had been on the island.

With a careful hand, Oddo pulled at the ladder ; and it did not give way. He tugged harder, and still it only shook. He must try it ; there was nothing else to be done. It was well for him now that he was used to dangerous climbing,—that

he had had adventures on the slippery, cracked glaciers of Sulitelma, and that being on a height, with precipices below, was no new situation to him. He climbed, trusting as little as possible to the ladder, setting his foot in preference on any projection of the rock, or any root of the smallest shrub. More than one pole cracked: more than one fastening gave way, when he had barely time to shift his weight upon a better support. He heard his grandfather's voice calling, and he could not answer. It disturbed him, now that his joints were strained, his limbs trembling, and his mouth parched so that his breath rattled as it came.

He reached the top, however. He sprang from the edge of the precipice, unable to look down, threw himself on his face, and panted and trembled, as if he had never before climbed anything less safe than a staircase. Never before, indeed, had he done anything like this. The feat was performed,—the islet was not to him inaccessible. This thought gave him strength. He sprang to his feet again, and whistled, loud and shrill. He could imagine the comfort this must be to Peder; and he whistled more and more merrily till he found himself rested enough to proceed on his search for Rolf. He went briskly on his way, not troubling himself with any thoughts of how he was to get down again.

Never had he seen a place so full of water-birds and their nests. Their nests strewed all the ground; and they themselves were strutting and waddling, fluttering and vociferating, in every direction. They were perfectly tame, knowing nothing of men, and having had no experience of disturbance. The ducks that were leading their broods allowed

Oddo to stroke their feathers ; and the drakes looked on, without taking any offence.

“ If Rolf is here,” thought Oddo, “ he has been living on most amiable terms with his neighbours.”

After an anxious thought or two of Nipen,—after a glance or two round the sky and shores for a sign of wind,—Oddo began in earnest his quest of Rolf. He called his name,—gently,—then louder.

There was some kind of answer. Some sound of human voice he heard, he was certain ; but so muffled, so dull, that whence it came he could not tell. It might even be his grandfather, calling from below. So he crossed to quite the verge of the little island, wishing with all his heart that the birds would be quiet, and cease their civility of all answering when he spoke. When quite out of hearing of Peder, Oddo called again, with scarcely a hope of any result, so plain was it to his eyes that no one resided on the island. On its small summit there was really no intermission of birds’ nests ;—no space where any one had lain down ;—no sign of habitation,—no vestige of food, dress, or utensils. With a saddened heart, therefore, Oddo called again ; and again he was sure there was an answer ; though whence and what he could not make out.

He then sang a part of a chant that he had learned by Rolf singing it as he sat carving his share of the new pulpit. He stopped in the middle, and presently believed that he heard the air continued, though the voice seemed so indistinct, and the music so much as if it came from underground, that Oddo began to recall, with some doubt and fear, the stories of the enchantment of the place. It was not long before he heard a cry from the water

below. Looking over the precipice he saw what made him draw back in terror: he saw the very thing Hund had described,—the swimming and staring head of Rolf, and the arms thrown up in the air. Not having Hund's conscience, however, and having much more curiosity, he looked again; and then a third time.

“Are you Rolf, really?” asked he, at last.

“Yes: but who are you,—Oddo or the demon,—up there where nobody can climb? Who are you?”

“I will show you. We will find each other out,” thought Oddo, with a determination to take the leap, and ascertain the truth.

He leaped, and struck the water at a sufficient distance from Rolf. When he came up again, they approached each other, staring, and each with some doubt as to whether the other was human or a demon.

“Are you really alive, Rolf?” said the one.

“To be sure I am, Oddo,” said the other: “but what demon carried you to the top of that rock, that no man ever climbed?”

Oddo looked mysterious, suddenly resolving to keep his secret for the present.

“Not that way,” said Rolf. “I have not the strength I had, and I can't swim round the place now. I was just resting myself when I heard you call, and came out to see. Follow me home.”

He turned, and began to swim homewards. Oddo had the strongest inclination to go with him, to see what would be revealed: but there were two objections. His grandfather must be growing anxious; and he was not perfectly sure yet whether

his guide might not be Nipen in Rolf's likeness, about to lead him to some hidden prison.

"Give me your hand, Rolf," said the boy, bravely.

It was a real, substantial, warm hand.

"I don't wonder you doubt," said Rolf, "I can't look much like myself, — unshaven, and shrunk, and haggard as my face must be."

Oddo was now quite satisfied; and he told of the boat and his grandfather. The boat was scarcely farther off than the cave; and poor Rolf was almost in extremity for drink. The water and brandy he brought with him had been finished nearly two days, and he was suffering extremely from thirst. He thought he could reach the boat, and Oddo led the way, bidding him not mind his being without clothes till they could find him some.

Glad was the old man to hear his boy's call from the water: and his face lighted up with wonder and pleasure when he heard that Rolf was not far behind. He lent a hand to help him into the boat, and asked no questions till he had given him food and drink. He reproached himself for having brought neither camphor nor assafoetida, to administer with the corn-brandy. Here was the brandy, however; and some water, and fish, and bread and cloud-berries. Great was the amazement of Peder and Oddo at Rolf's pushing aside the brandy, and seizing the water. When he had drained the last drop, he even preferred the cloud-berries to the brandy. A transient doubt thence occurred, whether this was Rolf, after all. Rolf saw it in their faces, and laughed: and when they had heard his story of what he had suffered from thirst, they were quite satisfied, and wondered no longer

He was all impatience to be gone. It tried him more now to think how long it would be before Erica could hear of his preservation than to bear all that had gone before. Being without clothes, however, it was necessary to visit the cave, and bring away what was there. In truth, Oddo was not sorry for this. His curiosity about the cave was so great that he felt it impossible to go home without seeing it; and the advantage of holding the secret knowledge of such a place was one which he would not give up. He seized an oar, gave another to Rolf; and they were presently off the mouth of the cave. Peder sighed at their having to leave him again: but he believed what Rolf said of there being no danger, and of their remaining close at hand. One or the other came popping up beside the boat, every minute, with clothes, or net, or lines, or brandy-flask, and finally with the oars of the poor broken skiff; being obliged to leave the skiff itself behind. Rolf did not forget to bring away whole handfuls of beautiful shells, which he had amused himself with collecting for Erica.

At last, they entered the boat again; and while they were dressing, Oddo charmed his grandfather with a description of the cave,—of the dark, sounding walls, the lofty roof, and the green tide breaking on the white sands. It almost made the listener cool to hear of these things: but, as Oddo had remarked, the heat had abated. It was near midnight, and the sun was going to set. Their row to the shore would be in the cool twilight: and then they should take in companions, who, fresh from rest, would save them the trouble of rowing home.

When all were too tired to talk, and the oars were dipping somewhat lazily, and the breeze had died away, and the sea-birds were quiet, old Peder, who appeared to his companions to be asleep, raised his head, and said,

“I heard a sob. Are you crying, Oddo?”

“Yes, grandfather.”

“What is your grief, my boy?”

“No grief,—anything but grief now. I have felt more grief than you know of though, or anybody. I did not know it fully myself till now.”

“Right, my boy: and right to say it out too.”

“I don’t care now who knows how miserable I have been. I did not believe, all the time, that Nipen had anything to do with these misfortunes——”

“Right, Oddo!” exclaimed Rolf, now.

“But I was not quite certain: and how could I say a word against it when I was the one to provoke Nipen? Now Rolf is safe, and Erica will be happy again, and I shall not feel as if everybody’s eyes were upon me, and know that it is only out of kindness that they do not reproach me as having done all the mischief, I shall hold up my head again now,—as some may think I have done all along: but I did not, in my own eyes,—no, not in my own eyes, for all these weary days that are gone.”

“Well, they are gone now,” said Rolf. “Let them go by and be forgotten.”

“Nay,—not forgotten,” said Peder. “How is my boy to learn if he forgets——”

“Don’t fear that for me, grandfather,” said Oddo, as the tears still streamed down his face. “No fear of that. I shall not forget these last days;—no, not as long as I live.”

CHAPTER XIII.

PLOT AND COUNTERPLOT.

THE comrades who were waiting and watching on the point were duly amazed to see three heads in the boat, on her return; and duly delighted to find that the third was Rolf,—alive, and no ghost. They asked question upon question, and Rolf answered some fully and truly, while he showed reserve upon others; and at last when closely pressed, he declared himself too much exhausted to talk, and begged permission to lie down in the bottom of the boat and sleep. Upon this a long silence ensued. It lasted till the farmhouse was in sight at which one of the rowers was to be landed. Oddo then exclaimed,

“I wonder what we have all been thinking about. We have not settled a single thing about what is to be said and done; and here we are almost in sight of home, and Hund’s cunning eyes.”

“I have settled all about it,” replied Rolf, raising himself up from the bottom of the boat, where they all thought he had been sleeping soundly. “My mind,” said he, “is quite clear. The first thing I have decided upon is that I may rely on the honour of our friends here. You have proved your kindness, friends, in coming on this expedition, but for which I should have died in my hole,

like a superannuated bear in its den. This is a story that the whole country will hear of; and our grandchildren will tell it, on winter nights, when there is talk of the war that brought the pirates on our coasts. Your names will go abroad with the story, comrades, and, on one condition, with high honour: and that condition is, that you say not a word beyond the family you live in, for the next few days, of the adventure of this night, or of your having seen me. More depends on this than you know of now; more than I will tell, this day, to any person but my master. My good old friend there will help me to a meeting with my master, without asking a question as to what I have to say to him. Will you not, Peder?"

"Surely. I have no doubt you are right," replied Peder.

The neighbours were rather sorry; but they could not object. They smiled at Oddo, and nodded encouragement, when he implored Rolf to fix a time when everything might be known, and to answer just this, and just that little inquiry.

"Oddo," said his grandfather, "be a man among us men. Show that your honour is more to you than your curiosity."

"Thank you, grandfather, I will. I will ask only one more question; and that Rolf will thank me for. Had we not better fix some place, far away from Hund's eyes and thoughts, for my master and Rolf to have their talk; and then I will guide my master——"

"Guide your master," cried Rolf, laughing, "when your master knew every rock and every track in the country years enough before you were born!"

“ You did not let me finish,” said Oddo. “ You may want a messenger,—he or you ; and *I* know every track in the country : and there is no one swifter of foot or that can keep counsel better.”

“ That is true, Rolf,” said Peder. “ If the boy is too curious to know everything, it is not for the sake of telling it again. If you should happen to want a messenger, it may be worth attending to what he says.”

“ I have no objection to add that to my plan, if Erlingsen pleases,” said Rolf. “ I must see Erlingsen ; but there is another person that I must make haste to see,—that I would fly to, if I could. What I wish is, that my master would meet me on the road to where she is ; supposing Hund to remain at home.”

He was told that there was no fear of Hund’s roving while the bishop was daily expected. Rolf having been out of the way, the whole story of the journey of the bishop of Tronyem had to be told him. It made him thoughtful ; and he dropped a word or two of satisfaction, as if it had thrown new light upon what he was thinking of.

“ All this,” said he, “ only makes me wish the more to see Erlingsen immediately. I should say the best way will be for you to set me ashore some way short of home, and ask Erlingsen to meet me at the Black Tarn. There cannot be a quieter place ; and I shall be so far on my way to the seater.”

“ If you will just make a looking-glass of the Black Tarn,” said Oddo, “ You will see that you have no business to carry such a face as yours to the seater. Erica will die of terror at you for the mountain-demon, before you can persuade her it is only you.”

“I was thinking,” observed one of the rowers, who relished the idea of going down to posterity in a wonderful story,—“I was just thinking that your wisest way will be to take a rest in my bed at Holberg’s, without anybody knowing, and shave yourself with my razor, and dress in my Sunday clothes, and so show yourself to your betrothed in such a trim as that she will be glad to see you.”

“Do so, Rolf,” urged Peder. Every body said “do so,” and agreed that Erica would suffer far less by remaining five or six hours longer in her present state of mind, than by seeing her lover look like a ghastly savage, or perhaps hearing that he was lying by the road side, dying of his exertions to reach her. Rolf tried to laugh at all this; but he could not contradict it. He would not hear a word of any messenger being sent. He declared that it would only torment her, as she would not believe in his return till she saw him: and he dropped something about every body being so wanted at home that nobody ought to stray.

All took place as it was settled in the boat. Before the people on Holberg’s farm had come in to breakfast, Rolf was snug in bed, with a large pitcher of whey by the bedside, to quench his still insatiable thirst. No one but the Holbergs knew of his being there; and he got away unseen in the afternoon, rested, shaven, and dressed, so as to look more like himself, though still haggard. Packing his old clothes into a bundle, which he carried with a stick over his shoulder, and laden with nothing else but a few rye-cakes, and a flask of the everlasting corn-brandy, he set forth, thanking his hosts very heartily for their care, and somewhat mysteriously assuring them that they would hear

something soon, and that meantime they had better not have to be sought far from home.

As he expected, he met no one whom he knew. Nine-tenths of the neighbours were far away on the seaters; and of the small remainder, almost all were attending the bishop on the opposite shore of the lake. Rolf shook his head at every deserted farm-house that he passed, thinking how the pirates might ransack the dwellings if they should happen to discover that few inhabitants remained in them but those whose limbs were too old to climb the mountain. He shook his head again when he thought what consternation he might spread through these dwellings by dropping at the doors the news of how near the pirate schooner lay. It seemed to be out of the people's minds now because it was out of sight, and the bishop had become visible instead. As for the security which some talked of from there being so little worth taking in the Nordland farm-houses,—this might be true if only one house was to be attacked, and that one defended: but half a dozen ruffians, coming ashore, to search eight or ten undefended houses in a day, might gather enough booty to pay them for their trouble. Of money they would find little or none; but in some families there were gold chains, crosses, and ear-rings, which had come down from a remote generation; or silver goblets and tankards. There were goats worth carrying away for their milk, and spirited horses and their harness, to sell at a distance. There were stores of the finest bed and table linen in the world; sacks of flour, cellars full of ale, kegs of brandy, and a mass of tobacco in every house. Fervently did Rolf wish, as he passed by these comfortable dwellings, that the enemy

would cast no eye or thought upon their comforts till he should have given such information in the proper quarters as should deprive them of the power of doing mischief in this neighbourhood.

Leaving the last of the farm-houses behind, he ascended the ravine, and came out upon the expanse of rich herbage which Erica had trodden but a few days before. He thought, as she had done, of his own description of their journeying together to the seater, and of the delight with which she would leap from the cart to walk with him, on the first sight of the waving grass upon the upland. His heart beat joyously at the thought, instead of mourning like hers. He was transported with happiness when he thought how near he was to her now, and on the eve of a season of delight,—a few balmy summer weeks upon the pastures, to be followed by his marriage. This affair of the pirates once finished, was ever man so happy as he was going to be? The thought made him spring as lightly through the tall grass that lay between him and the Black Tarn as the reindeer from point to point of the mountain steep.

The breeze blew in his face, refreshing him with its coolness, and with the fragrance of the birch, with which it was loaded. But it brought something else,—a transient sound which surprised Rolf,—voices of men, who seemed, if he could judge from so rapid a hint, to be talking angrily. He began to consider whom, besides Oddo, Erlingsen could have thought it safe or necessary to bring with him, or whether it was somebody met with by chance. At all events, it would be wisest not to show himself, and to approach with all possible caution. Cautiously therefore he drew near, keep-

ing a vigilant watch all around, and ready to pop down into the grass on any alarm. Being unable to see any one near the tarn, he was convinced the talkers must be seated under the crags on its margin; and he therefore made a circuit, to get behind the rocks, and then climbed a huge fragment, which seemed to have been toppled down from some steep, and to have rolled to the brink of the water. Two stunted pines grew out from the summit of this crag; and between these pines Rolf placed himself, and looked down from thence.

Two men sat on the ground in the shadow of the rock. One was Hund, and the other must undoubtedly be one of the pirate crew. His dress, arms, and broken language all showed him to be so: and it was, in fact, the same man that Erica had met near the same place; though that she had had such an adventure was the last thing her lover dreamed of as he surveyed the man's figure from above.

This man appeared surly. Hund was extremely agitated.

“It is very hard,” said he, “when all I want is to do no harm to anybody,—neither to my old friends nor my new acquaintances,—that I cannot be let alone. I have done too much mischief in my life already. The demons have made sport of me;—it is their sport that I have as many lives to answer for as any man of twice my age in Nordland; and now that I would be harmless for the rest of my days ———”

“Don't trouble yourself to talk about your days,” interrupted the pirate; “they will be too few to be worth speaking of, if you do not put yourself under our orders again. You are a de-

serter,—and as a deserter you go back with me, unless you choose to go as a comrade.”

“And what might I expect that your orders would be, if I went with you?”

“You know very well that we want you for a guide. That is all you are worth. In a fight, you would only be in the way—unless indeed you could contrive to get out of the way.”

“Then you would not expect me to fight against my master and his people?”

“Nobody was ever so foolish as to expect you to fight, more or less, I should think. No, your business would be to pilot us to Erlingsen’s, and answer truly all our questions about their ways and doings.”

“Surprise them in their sleep!” muttered Hund. “Wake them up with the light of their own burning roofs! And they would know me by that light! They would point me out to the bishop;—they would find time in their hurry to mark me for the monster they might well think me!”

“Yes: you would be in the front, of course,” observed the pirate. “But there is one comfort for you:—if you are so earnest to see the bishop as you told me you were, my plan is the best. When once we lock him down on board our schooner, you can have him all to yourself. You can confess your sins to him the whole day long; for nobody else will want a word with either of you. You can show him your enchanted island, down in the fiord, and see if he can lay the ghost for you.”

Hund sprang to his feet in an agony of passion. The well-armed pirate was up as soon as he. Rolf

drew back two paces, to be out of sight, if by chance they should look up, and armed himself with a heavy stone. He heard the pirate say

“ You can try to run away, if you like: I shall shoot you through the head before you have gone five yards. And you may refuse to return with me; and then I shall know how to report of you to my captain. I shall tell him that you are lying at the bottom of this lake,—if it has a bottom,—with a stone tied round your neck, like a drowned wild cat. I hope you may chance to find your enemy there, to make the place the pleasanter.”

Rolf could not resist the impulse to send his heavy stone into the middle of the tarn, to see the effect upon the men below. He gave a good cast, on the very instant; and prodigious was the splash, as the stone hit the water, precisely in the middle of the little lake. The men did not see the cause of the commotion that followed; but, starting and turning at the splash, they saw the rings spreading in the dark waters which had lain as still as the heavens but a moment before. How could two guilty, superstitious men doubt that the waters were thrown into agitation by the pirate's last words. Yet they glanced fearfully round the whole landscape, far and near. They saw no living thing but a hawk which, startled from its perch on a scathed pine, was wheeling round in the air in an unsteady flight. The pirate pointed to the bird with one hand, while he laid the other on the pistol in his belt.

“ Yes,” said Hund trembling, “ the bird saw it. Did you see it?”

“ See what?”

“The water-sprite, Uldra. Before you throw me in to the water-sprite, we will see which is the strongest.”

And in desperation Hund, unarmed as he was, threw himself upon the pirate,—sprang at his throat,—and both wrestled with all their force. Rolf could not but look; and he saw that the pirate had drawn forth his pistol, and that all would be over with Hund in a moment if he did not interfere. He stood forward between the two pine stems, on the ridge of the rock, and uttered very loud the mournful cry which had so terrified his enemies at Vogel islet. The combatants flew asunder, as if parted by a flash of lightning. Both looked up to the point whence the sound had come; and there they saw what they supposed to be Rolf's spectre, pointing at them, and the eyes staring as when looking up from the waters of the fiord. How could these guilty and superstitious men doubt that it was Rolf's spectre which, rising through the centre of the tarn, had caused the late commotion in its waters? Away they fled,—at first in different directions: but it amused Rolf to observe that, rather than be alone, Hund turned to follow the track of the tyrant who had just been threatening and insulting him, and driving him to struggle for his life.

“Ay,” thought Rolf, “it is his conscience that makes me so much more terrible to him than that ruffian. I never hurt a hair of his head; and yet, through his conscience, my face is worse than the blasting lightning to his eyes.—When will all the people hereabouts find out, as my mistress said when I was a boy (apt, as boys are, to remember the wise things that such a gentle mistress says)—

when will people find out that the demons and sprites they live in fear of all come out of their own heads and hearts? Here, in Hund's case, is guilt shaping out visions whichever way he turns. Not one of his ghost-stories is there, for months past, but I am at the bottom of it; and that only through his consciousness of hating and wanting to injure me. Then, in the opposite case,—of one as innocent as the whitest flower in all this pasture,—in my Erica's case,—the ghosts she sees are all from passions that leave her heart pure, but bewilder her eyes. It is the fear that she was early made subject to, and the grief that she feels for her mother, that create demons and sprites for her. The day may come, if I can make her happy enough, when I may convince her that, for all she now thinks, she never yet saw a token of any evil spirit:—of any spirit but the Good One that rules all things. What a sigh she will give,—what a free breathing hers will be, the day when I can show her, as plainly as I see myself, that it is nothing but her own fears and griefs that have crossed her path, and she never doubting that they were demons and sprites! Heigh-ho! Where is Erlingsen? It is nothing short of cruel to keep me waiting to-day, of all days; and in this spot, of all places,—almost within sight of the seater where my poor Erica sits pining, and seeing nothing of the pastures, but only, with her mind's eye, the sea-caves where she thinks these limbs are stretched, cold and helpless, as in a grave. A pretty story I shall have to tell her, if she will only believe it, of another sort of sea-cave."

To pass the time, he took out the shells he had collected for Erica, and admired them afresh, and

planned where she would place them, so as best to adorn their sitting-room, when they were married. Erlingsen arrived before he had been thus engaged five minutes; and indeed before he had been more than a quarter of an hour altogether at the place of meeting.

“ My dear master !” exclaimed Rolf, on seeing him coming, “ have pity on Erica and me; and hear what I have to tell you, that I may be gone.”

“ You shall be gone at once, my good fellow ! I will walk with you, and you shall tell your story as we go.”

Rolf shook his head, and objected that he could not, in conscience, take Erlingsen a step further from home than was necessary, as he was only too much wanted there.

“ Is that Oddo yonder ?” he asked. “ He said you would bring him.”

“ Yes : he has grown trustworthy of late. We have had fewer heads and hands among us than the times require since Peder grew old and blind, and you were missing, and Hund had to be watched instead of trusted. So we have been obliged to make a man of Oddo, though he has the years of a boy, and the curiosity of a woman. I brought him now, thinking that a messenger might be wanted, to raise the country against the pirates : and I believe Oddo, in his present mood, will be as sure as we know he can be swift.”

“ It is well we have a messenger. Where is the bishop ?”

“ Just going to his boat, at this moment, I doubt not,” replied Erlingsen, measuring with his eye the length of the shadows. “ The bishop is to sup with us this evening.”

“ And how long to stay ? ”

“ Over to-morrow night, at the least. If many of the neighbours should bring their business to him, it may be longer. My little Frolich will be vexed that he should come while she is absent. Indeed I should not much wonder if she sets out homeward when she hears the news you will carry, so that we shall see her at breakfast.”

“ It is more likely,” observed Rolf, “ that we shall see the bishop up the mountain at breakfast. Ah ! you stare : but you will find I am not out of my wits when you hear what has come to my knowledge since we parted, and especially within this hour.”

—Erlingsen was indeed presently convinced that it was the intention of the pirates to carry off the bishop of Tronyem, in order that his ransom might make up to them for the poverty of the coasts. He heard besides such an ample detail of the plundering practices which Rolf had witnessed from his retreat as convinced him that the strangers, though in great force, must be prevented by a vigorous effort from doing further mischief. The first thing to be done was to place the bishop in safety on the mountain ; and the next was so to raise the country as that these pirates should be certainly taken when they should come within reach.

Oddo was called, and entrusted with the information which had to be conveyed to the magistrate at Saltdalen. He carried his master's tobacco-pouch as a token,—this pouch, of Lapland make, being well known to the magistrate as Erlingsen's. Oddo was to tell him of the danger of the bishop, and to request him to send to the spot whatever force could be mustered at Saltdalen ; and moreover to

issue the budstick,* to raise the country. The pirates having once entered the upper reach of the fiord, might thus be prevented from ever going back again, and from annoying any more the neighbourhood which they had so long infested.

Erlingsen promised to be wary on his return homewards, so as not to fall in with the two whom Rolf had put to flight. He said, however, that if by chance he should cross their path, he did not doubt he could also make them run, by acting the ghost or demon, though he had not had Rolf's advantage of disappearing in the fiord before their eyes. They were already terrified enough to fly from anything that called itself a ghost.

The three then went on their several ways,—Oddo speeding over the ridges like a sprite on a night errand, and Rolf striding up the grassy slopes like (what he was) a lover anxious to be beside his betrothed, after a perilous absence.

* When it is desired to send a summons or other message over a district in Norway where the dwellings are scattered, the budstick is sent round by running messengers. It is a stick made hollow, to hold the magistrate's order, and a screw at one end to secure the paper in its place. Each messenger runs a certain distance, and then delivers it to another, who must carry it forward. If any one is absent, the budstick must be laid upon the "housefather's great chair, by the fire-side;" and if the house is locked, it must be fastened outside the door, so as to be seen as soon as the host returns. Upon great occasions, it was formerly found that a whole region could be raised in a very short time. The method is still in use for appointments on public business.

CHAPTER XIV.

MIDNIGHT.

THIS was the day when the first cheese of the season was found to be perfect and complete. Frolich, Stiorna, and Erica examined it carefully, and pronounced it a well-pressed, excellent gammel cheese, such as they should not be ashamed to set before the bishop, and therefore one which ought to satisfy the demon. It now only remained to carry it to its destination;—to the ridge where the first cheese of the season was always laid for the demon, and where, it appeared, he regularly came for his offering, as no vestige of the gift was ever to be found the next morning,—only the round place in the grass where it had lain, and the marks of some feet which had trodden the herbage.

“Help me up with it upon my head, Stiorna,” said Erica. “If Frolich looks at it any longer, she will grudge such a cheese going where it ought. Is not that the thought that is in your mind at this moment, Frolich, dear?”

“No. I do not grudge it,” replied Frolich. “My mother says it is right freely to give whatever the feelings of those who help us require.”

“And you do thus freely give,—my mistress and all who belong to her, without a sign of grudging,” declared Erica. “But would you not

be better pleased if the gift required was a bunch of moss-flowers, or a basket of cloud-berries?"

"Perhaps so;—yet, no; I think not. Our good cheeses are not wasted. They do not lie and rot in the sun and the mists. Somebody has the benefit of them, whether it be the demon or not."

"Who else should it be?" asked Stiorna. "There is not a man, woman, or child, on any seater in Sulitelma, who would touch a cheese laid out for the mountain-demon."

"Perhaps not. I never watched to see what happens when the gammel cheese is left alone. I only say I do not grudge our cheese, as somebody has it. I will carry it myself, in token of goodwill, if you will let me, Erica. Here,—shift it upon my head."

Erica would not hear of this, and began to walk away with her load, begging Stiorna to watch the cattle,—not once to take her eye off them, till she should return to assume her watch for the night hours.

"I know why you will not let me carry the cheese," said Frolich, smiling. "You are thinking of Oddo with the cake and ale. Nobody but you must deposit offerings henceforward. You are afraid I should eat up that cheese, almost as heavy as myself. You think there would not be a paring left for the demon, by the time I got to the ridge."

"Not so," replied Erica. "I think that he to whom this cheese is destined had rather be served by one who does not laugh at him. And it is a safer plan for you, Frolich."

And off went Erica with her cheese.

The ridge on which she laid it would have

tempted her at any other time to sit down. It was green and soft with mosses, and offered as comfortable a couch to one tired with the labours of the day as any to be found at the farm. But to-night it was to be haunted: so Erica merely staid to do her duty. She selected the softest tuft of moss on which to lay the cheese, put her offering reverently down, and then diligently gathered the brightest blossoms from the herbage around, and strewed them over the cheese. She then walked rapidly homewards, without once looking behind her. If she had had the curiosity and courage to watch for a little while, she would have seen her offering carried off by an odd little figure, with nothing very terrible in its appearance; namely, a woman about four feet high, with a flat face, and eyes wide apart, wearing a reindeer garment like a waggoner's frock, a red comforter about her neck, a red cloth cap on her head, a blue worsted sash, and leather boots up to the knee:—in short, such a Lapland girl as Erica would have given a rye-cake to as charity, but would not have thought of asking to sit down even in her master's kitchen;—for the Norwegian servants are very high and saucy towards the Lapps who wander to their doors. It is not surprising that the Lapps who pitch their tents on the mountain should like having a fine gaumel cheese for the trouble of picking it up: and the company whose tents Erica had passed on her way up to the seater kept a good look-out upon all the dairy people round, and carried off every cheese meant for the demon. While Erica was gathering and strewing the blossoms, this girl was hidden near; and, trusting to Erica's not looking behind her, the rogue swept off the blossoms, and

threw them at her, before she had gone ten yards, trundled the cheese down the other side of the ridge, made a circuit, and was at the tents with her prize before supper time. What would Erica have thought if she had beheld this fruit of so many milkings and skimmings, so much boiling and pressing, devoured by greedy Lapps, in their dirty tent?

On her way homewards Erica remembered that this was Midsummer Eve,—a season when her mother was in her thoughts more than at any other time; for Midsummer Eve is sacred in Norway to the wood-demon, whose victim she believed her mother to have been. Every woodman sticks his axe into a tree that night, that the demon may, if he pleases, begin the work of the year by felling trees, or making a faggot. Erica hastened to the seater, to discover whether Erlingsen had left his axe behind, and whether Jan had one with him.

Jan had an axe, and, remembering his duty, though tired and sleepy, was just going to the nearest pine-grove with it when Erica reached home. She seized Erlingsen's axe and went also, and stuck it in a tree, just within the verge of the grove, which was in that part a thicket, from the growth of underwood. This thicket was so near the back of the dairy that the two were home in five minutes. Yet they found Frolich almost as impatient as if they had been gone an hour. She asked whether their heathen worship was done at last, so that all might go to bed; or whether they were to be kept awake till midnight by more mumery?

Erica replied by showing that Jan was already gone to his loft over the shed, and begging leave to

comb and curl Frolich's hair,* and see her to rest at once. Stiorna was asleep; and Erica herself meant to watch the cattle this night. They lay couched in the grass, all near each other, and within view, in the mild slanting sunshine: and here she intended to sit, on the bench outside the home-shed, and keep her eye on them till morning.

"You are thinking of the bishop of Tronyem's cattle," said Frolich.

"I am, dear. This is Midsummer Eve, you know,—when, as we think, all the spirits love to be abroad."

"You will die before your time, Erica," said the weary girl. "These spirits give you no rest of body or mind. What a day's work we have done! And now you are going to watch till twelve, one, two o'clock! I could not keep awake," she said, yawning, "if there was one demon at the head of the bed, and another at the foot, and the underground people running like mice all over the floor."

"Then go and sleep, dear. I will fetch your comb, if you will just keep an eye on the cattle for the moment I am gone."

As Erica combed Frolich's long fair hair, and admired its shine in the sunlight, and twisted it up behind, and curled it on each side, the weary girl leaned her head against her, and dropped asleep. When all was done, she just opened her eyes to find her way to bed, and say

"You may as well go to bed comfortably; for you will certainly drop asleep here, if you don't there."

* Hair-brushes were unknown at the date of this story.

“Not with my pretty Spiel in sight. I would not lose my white heifer for seven nights' sleep. You will thank me when you find your cow, and all the rest, safe in the morning. Good night, dear.”

And Erica closed the door after her young mistress, and sat down on the bench outside with her face towards the sun, her lure by her side, and her knitting in her hands. She was glad that the herd lay so that by keeping her eye on them she could watch that wonder of Midsummer night within the Arctic Circle, the dipping of the sun below the horizon, to appear again immediately. She had never been far enough to the north to see the sun complete its circle without disappearing at all; but she did not wish it. She thought the softening of the light which she was about to witness, and the speedy renewing of day, more wonderful and beautiful.

She sat, soothed by her employment and by the tranquillity of the scene, and free from fear. She had done her duty by the spirits of the mountain and the wood; and in case of the appearance of any object that she did not like, she could slip into the house in an instant. Her thoughts were therefore wholly Rolf's. She could endure now to contemplate a long life spent in doing honour to his memory by the industrious discharge of duty. She would watch over Peder, and receive his last breath,—an office which should have been Rolf's. She would see another houseman arrive, and take possession of that house, and become betrothed and marry: and no one,—not even her watchful mistress, should see a trace of repining in her countenance, or hear a tone of bitterness from her lips.

It should be her part to see that others were happier than she had been; that no presumption or carelessness should bring on them the displeasure of powerful beings. However weary her heart might be, she would dance at every wedding,—of fellow-servant or of young mistress. She would eloud nobody's happiness, but would do all she could to make Rolf's memory pleasant to those who had known him, and wished him well. She thought she could do all this in prospect of the day when her grave should be dug beside those of Peder and Ulla, and when her spirit should meet Rolf, and learn at length how he had died, and be assured that he had watched over her as faithfully as she had remembered him.

As these thoughts passed through her mind, making her future life appear shorter and less dreary than she could have imagined possible a few hours before, her fingers were busily at work, and her eyes rested on the lovely scene before her,—the flowery pasture in which the dappled herd were lying, while far, far beyond, a yellow glittering expanse of waters spread as if to receive the sinking sun. From the elevation at which she was, it appeared as if the ocean swelled up into the very sky, so high was the horizon line; and between lay a vast region of rock and river, hill and dale, forest, fiord, and town, part in golden sunlight, part in deep shadow, but all, though bright as the skies could make it, silent as became the hour. As Erica found that she could glance at the sun itself without losing sight of the cattle, which still lay within her indirect vision, she carefully watched the descent of the orb, anxious to observe precisely when it should disappear, and how soon its golden

spark would kindle up again from the waves. When its lower rim was just touching the waters, its circle seemed to be of an enormous size, and its whole mass to be flaming. Its appearance was very unlike that of the comparatively small, compact, brilliant luminary which rides the sky at noon. Erica was just thinking so, when a rustle in the thicket, within the pine grove, made her involuntarily turn her head in that direction. Instantly remembering that it was a common device of the underground people for one of them to make the watcher look away, in order that others might drive off the cattle, she resumed her duty, and gazed stedfastly at the herd. They were safe—neither reduced to the size of mice, nor wandering off, though she had let her eye glance away from them.

The sky, however, did not look itself. There were two suns in it. Now, Erica really did quite forget the herd for some time, even her dear white heifer,—while she stared bewildered at the spectacle before her eyes. There was one sun, the sun she had always known,—half sunk in the sea, while above it hung another, round and complete, somewhat less bright, perhaps, but as distinct and plain before her eyes as any object in heaven or earth had ever been. Her work dropped from her hands, as she covered her eyes for a moment. She started to her feet, and then looked again. It was still there, though the lower sun was almost gone. As she stood gazing, she once more heard the rustle in the wood. Though it crossed her mind that the wood-demon was doubtless there making choice of his axe and his tree, she could not move, and had not even a wish to take refuge

in the house, so wonderful was this spectacle,—the clearest instance of enchantment she had ever seen. Was it meant for good,—a token that the coming year was to be a doubly bright one? If not, how was she to understand it?

“Erica!” cried a voice at this moment from the wood,—a voice which thrilled her whole frame. “My Erica!”

She not only looked towards the wood now, but sprang forwards: but her eyes were so dazzled by having gazed at the sun that she could see nothing. Then she remembered how many forms the cunning demon could assume, and she turned back thinking how cruel it was to delude her with her lover’s voice, when instead of his form she should doubtless see some horrid monster; most likely a hippopotamus, or, at best, an overgrown bear, showing its long, sharp, white teeth, to terrify her. She turned in haste, and laid her hand on the latch of the door, glancing once more at the horizon.

There was now no sun at all. The burnish was gone from every point of the landscape, and a mild twilight reigned.

One good omen had vanished; but there was still enchantment around; for again she heard the thrilling “Erica!”

There was no huge beast glaring through the pine stems, and trampling down the thicket; but, instead, there was the figure of a man advancing from the shadow into the pasture.

“Why do you take that form?” said the trembling girl, sinking down on the bench. “I had rather have seen you as a bear. Did you not find the axe? I laid it for you. Pray,—pray, come no nearer.”

“I must, my love, to show you that it is your own Rolf. Erica, do not let your superstition come for ever between us.”

She held out her arms;—she could not rise, though she strove to do so. Rolf sat beside her, —she felt his kisses on her forehead,—she felt his heart beat,—she felt that not even a spirit could assume the very tones of that voice.

“Do forgive me,” she murmured: but it is Midsummer Eve; and I felt so sure——”

“As sure of my being the demon as I am sure there is no cruel spirit here, though it is Midsummer Eve. Look, love! see how the day smiles upon us!”

And he pointed to where a golden star seemed to kindle on the edge of the sea. It was the sun again, rising after its few minutes of absence.

“I saw two just now,” cried Erica,—“two suns. Where are we, really? And how is all this? And where do you come from?”

And she gazed, still wistfully,—doubtfully, in her lover’s face.

“I will show you,” said he smiling. And while he still held her with one arm, lest, in some sudden fancy, she should fly him as a ghost, he used the other hand to empty his pockets of the beautiful shells he had brought, tossing them into her lap.

“Did you ever see such, Erica? I have been where they lie in heaps. Did you ever see such beauties?”

“I never did, Rolf; you have been at the bottom of the sea.”

And once more she shrank from what she took for the grasp of a drowned man.

“Not to the bottom, love,” replied he, still

clasping her hand. "Our fiord is deep; perhaps as deep as they say. I dived as deep as a man may, to come up with the breath in his body; but I could never find the bottom. Did I not tell you that I should go down as far as Vogel island; and that I should there be safe?"

"Yes! You did—you did!"

"Well! I went to Vogel island; and here I am safe!"

"It is you! We are together again!" she exclaimed, now in full belief. "Thank God! Thank God!"

As she wept upon his shoulder, he told her where he had been, what perils he had met, how he had been saved, and how he had arrived the first moment he could; and then he went on to declare that their enemies would soon be disposed of, that they would be married, that they would take possession of Peder's house, and make him comfortable, and would never be separated again as long as they lived.

They did not heed the time, as they talked and talked; and Rolf was just telling how he had more than once seen a double sun, without finding any remarkable consequences follow, when Stiorna came forth with her milk-pails, just before four o'clock. She started and dropped one of her pails, when she saw who was sitting on the bench; and Erica started no less at the thought of how completely she had forgotten the cattle and the underground people all this time. The herd was all safe, however,—every cow as large as life, and looking exactly like itself: so that the good fortune of this Midsummer Eve had been perfect

CHAPTER XV.

MOUNTAIN FARE.

THE appearance of Stiorna reminded the lovers that it was time to begin the business of the morning. They startled Stiorna with the news that a large company was coming to breakfast. Being in no very amiable temper towards happy lovers, she refused after a moment's thought to believe what they said, and sat down sulking to her task of milking. So Rolf proceeded to rouse Jan; and Erica stepped to Frolich's bedside, and waked her with a kiss.

"Erica! No, can it be?" said the active girl, up in a moment. "You look too happy to be Erica."

"Erica never was so happy before, dear; that is the reason. You were right, Frolich,—bless your kind heart for it! Rolf was not dead. He is here."

Frolich galloped round the room, like one crazy, before proceeding to dress.

"Whenever you like to stop," said Erica, laughing, "I have some good news for you too."

"I am to go and see the bishop!" cried Frolich, clapping her hands, and whirling round on one foot like an opera-dancer.

"Not so, Frolich."

"There now! you promise me good news; and

then you won't let me go and see the bishop, when you know that is the only thing in the world I want or wish for!"

"Would it not be a great compliment to you, and save you a great deal of trouble, if the bishop were to come here to see you?"

"Ah! that would be a pretty sight! The bishop of Tronyem over the ankles in the sodden, trodden pasture,—sticking in the mud of Sulitelma! The bishop of Tronyem sleeping upon hay in the loft, and eating his dinner off a wooden platter! That would be the most wonderful sight that Nordland ever saw."

"Prepare, then, to see the bishop of Tronyem drink his morning coffee out of a wooden bowl. Meantime, I must go and grind his coffee.—Seriously, Frolich, you must make haste to dress and help. The pirates want to carry off the bishop for ransom. Erlingsen is raising the country. Hund is coming here as a prisoner; and the bishop, and my mistress, and Orga, to be safe; and if you do not help me, I shall have nothing ready; for Stiorna does not like the news."

Never had Frolich dressed more quickly. She thought it very hard that the bishop should see her when she had nothing but her dairy dress to wear; but she was ready all the sooner for this. Erica consoled her with her belief that the bishop was the last person who could be supposed to make a point of a silk gown for a mountain maiden.

A consultation about the arrangements was held before the door by the four who were in a good humour; for Stiorna remained aloof. This, like other mountain dwellings, was a mere sleeping and eating shed, only calculated for a bare shelter, at

night, at meals, and from occasional rain. There was no apartment at the seater in which the bishop could hold an audience, out of the way of the cooking and other household transactions. It could not be expected of him to sit on the bench outside, or on the grass, like the people of the establishment; for, unaccustomed as he was to spend his days in the open air, his eyes would be blinded, and his face blistered, by the sun. The young people cast their eyes on the pine-wood, as the fittest summer parlour for him, if it could be provided with seats.

Erica sprang forward, to prevent any one from entering the wood till she should have seen what state the place was in on this particular morning. No trees had been felled, and no branches cut since the night before; and the axes remained where they had been hung. The demon had not wanted them, it seemed, and there was no fear of intruding upon him now. So the two young men set to work to raise a semicircular range of turf seats in the pleasantest part of the shady grove. The central seat, which was raised above the rest, and had a footstool, was well cushioned with dry and soft moss; and the rough bark was cut from the trunk of the tree against which it was built; so that the stem served as a comfortable back to the chair. Rolf tried the seat when finished; and as he leaned back, feasting his eyes on the vast sunny landscape which was to be seen between the trees of the grove, he declared that it was infinitely better to sit here than in the bishop's stall in Tronyem cathedral.

“Surely,” said Erica, whom he had summoned to see the work. “When God plants a lofty mountain, overlooking the glorious sea, with the

heavens themselves for a roof, He makes a temple with which no church built by men can compare. I suppose men build cathedrals in cities because they are not so happy as to have a mountain to worship on."

"How I pity the countries that have no glorious mountains!" cried Frolich; "especially if few of their people live in sight of the vast sea, or in the heart of deep forests."

And, by one impulse, they all struck up the national air *For Norgé*,—a thanksgiving for their home being planted in the midst of the northern seas.

All being done now for which a strong arm was wanted, Rolf declared that he and Jan must be gone to the farm. Not a man could be spared from the shores of the fiord, till the affairs of the pirates should be settled. Erica ought to have expected to hear this; but her cheek grew white as it was told. She spoke no word of objection, however, seeing plainly what her lover's duty was.

She turned towards the dairy when he was gone, instead of indulging herself with watching him down the mountain. She was busy skimming bowl after bowl of rich milk, when Frolich ran in to say that Stiorna had dressed herself, and put up her bundle, and was setting forth homewards, to see, as she said, the truth of things there;—which meant, of course, to learn Hund's condition and prospects. It was now necessary to tell her that she would presently see Hund brought up to the seater a prisoner; and that the farm was no place for any but fighting-men this day. To save her feelings and temper, Erica asked her to watch the herd, leading them to a point whence she could soonest see the expected company mounting the uplands.

Frolich shook her head often and mournfully over the breakfast. The skill and diligent hands of two people could not, up in the clouds here, cover the long table in a way which appeared at all creditable to Nordland eyes. Do what they would, it was only bread, cheese, butter, berries, and cream; and then berries and cream, butter, cheese, and bread. They garnished with moss, leaves, and flowers; they disposed their few bowls and platters to the best advantage,—taking some from the dairy which could ill be spared. It was still but a poor apology for a feast; and Frolich looked so ready to cry as to make Erica laugh.

Presently, however, there were voices heard from the hill above. Some traveller who had met the budstick had reported the proceedings below, and the news had spread to a northern seater. The men had gone down to the fiord; and here were the women with above a gallon of strawberries, fresh gathered, and a score of plovers' eggs.—Next appeared a pony, coming westward over the pasture, laden with panniers containing a tender kid, a packet of spices, a jar of preserved cherries, and a few of the present season, early ripe; and a stone bottle of ant-vinegar.*—Frolich's spirits rose higher and higher, as more people came from below, sent by Rolf on his way down. A deputation of Lapps came from the tents, bringing reindeer venison, and half of a fine gammel cheese. Before Erica had had time to pour out a glass of corn-brandy for each of this dwarfish party, in token of

* Ants abound in Norway, both in the forests and on the mountains. Some, of a large kind, are boiled for the sake of the (formic) acid they contain; and the water when strained is used for vinegar. It is as good as weak vinegar.

thanks, and because it is considered unlucky to send away Lapps without a treat, other mountain dwellers came with offerings of tydder, roer, ryper, and jerper;* so that the dresser was loaded with game enough to feed half a hundred hungry men.

Some of these willing neighbours stayed to help. One went to pick more cloud-berries on the edge of the nearest bog. Another rode off, on the pony, to beg a supply of sugar from a house where it was known to abound. Two or three more cleared a space for a fire behind a thicket, and prepared to broil the venison, and stew the kid, while others sat down to pluck the game. The Lapps, as being dirty and despised, were got rid of as soon as possible.

Erica and Frolich returned to their breakfast-table, to make the new arrangements now necessary, and place the fruit and spices. Erica closely examined the piece of gammel cheese brought by the Lapps, and then, with glowing cheeks, called Frolich to her.

“What now?” said Frolich. “Have you found a way of telling fortunes with the hard cheese, as some pretend to do with the soft curds?”

“Look here,” said Erica. “What stamp is this? The cheese has been scraped,—almost pared, you see: but they have left one little corner. And whose stamp is there?”

“Ours,” said Frolich, coolly. “This is the cheese you laid out on the ridge last night.”

“I believe it. I see it,” exclaimed Erica.

* Tydder and roer are the cock and hen of the wild bird called in Scotland the capercaillie. The ryper is the ptarmigan. The jerper is of the grouse species.—(Lloyd's Field Sports of the North of Europe.)

“Now, dear Erica, do not let us have the old story of your being frightened about what the demon will say and do. Nobody but you will be surprised that the Lapps help themselves with good things that lie strewing the ground. You know I gave you a hint, just twelve hours since, of what would become of this same cheese.”

“You did,” admitted Erica. To Frolich’s delight and surprise, she appeared too busy,—or was rather, perhaps, too happy,—to lament this mischance, as she would formerly have done. Possibly she comforted herself with thinking, that if the demon had set its heart upon the cheese, it might have been beforehand with the Lapps. She contented herself with setting apart the dish till her mistress should decide what ought to be done with it. Just when a youth from the highest pasture on Sulitelma had come running and panting, to present Frolich with a handful of fringed pinks and blue gentian, plucked from the very edge of the glacier, so that their colours were reflected in the ice, Stiorna appeared, in haste, to tell that a party on horseback and on foot were winding out of the ravine, and coming straight up over the pasture.—All was now certainty; and great was the bustle, to put out of sight all unseemly tokens of preparation. In the midst of the hurry, Frolich found time to twist some of her pretty flowers into her pretty hair; so that it might easily chauce that the bishop would not miss her silk gown.—When, however, were unfashionable mothers known to forget the interests of their daughters? Madame Erlingsen never did: and she now engaged one of the bishop’s followers to ride forward with a certain bundle which Orga had carried on her lap. The man dis-

charged his errand so readily that, on the arrival of the train, Frolich was seen so dressed, walking "in silk attire," as to appear to all eyes as the daughter of the hostess.

The bishop's reputation preceded him, as is usual in such cases.

"Where is he now?" "How far off is he?" "Why does he not come?" asked one and another of the expectant people, of those who first appeared before the seater.

"He is at the tents, speaking to the Lapps."

"Speaking to the Lapps! impossible! What Lapp would ever dream of being spoken to by a bishop of Tronyem?"

"He is with them, however. When I left him, he was just stooping to enter one of their tents."

"Now you must be joking. The Lapps are low people enough in the open pasture; but in their tents,—pah!"

He did not go in without a reason. There was a sick child in the tent, who could not come out to him. The mother wished him to see and pronounce upon the charms she was employing for her child's benefit, and he himself chose to be satisfied whether any medical knowledge which he possessed could avail to restore the sick. Nothing was more certain than that the bishop of Tronyem was in a Lapland tent. The fact was confirmed by M. Kollsen, who next appeared, musing as he rode, with countenance of extreme gravity (to say the least of it). He would fain have denied that his bishop was smiling upon Lapps who wore charms; but he could not. He muttered that it was very extraordinary.

"Quite as much so," whispered Erica to Frolich,

“as that the Holiest should be found in the house of a publican.”

“What is that?” inquired the vigilant M. Kollsen. “What was your remark?”

Erica blushed deeply; but Frolich readily declared what it was that she had said; and in return M. Kollsen remarked on the evil of ignorant persons applying Scripture according to their own narrow notions.

“Two—four—eight horses,” observed a herdsman. “I think the neighbours should each take one or two; or here will soon be an end of Erlingsen’s new hay. This lot of pasture will never feed eight horses, besides his own and the herd.”

“Better than having them carried off by the pirates,” said a neighbour. “But I will run home and send a load of grass.”

In such an amiable mood did the bishop find all who were awaiting him at his place of refuge. On their part, they were persuaded that he deserved all their love, even if he had some low notions about the Lapps.

As the bishop’s horse, followed by those which bore the ladies, reached the house door, all present cried,

“Welcome to the mountain!” “Welcome to Sulitelma!”

The bishop observed that, often as he had wished to look abroad from Sulitelma, and to see with his own eyes what life at the seaters was like, he should have grown old without the desire being gratified, but for the design of the enemy upon him. It was all he could do to go the rounds of his diocese, from station to station below, without thinking of journeys of pleasure. Yet here he was on Sulitelma!

When he and M. Kollsen and the ladies had dismounted, and were entering the house to breakfast, the gazers found leisure to observe the hindmost of the train of riders. It was Hund, with his feet tied under his horse, and the bridle held by a man on each side. He had seen and heard too much of the preparations against the enemy to be allowed to remain below, or at large anywhere, till the attack should be over. He could not dismount till some one untied his legs; and no one would do that till a safe place could be found, in which to confine him. It was an awkward situation enough, sitting there bound before every body's eyes; and not the less for Stiorna's leaning her head against the horse, and crying at seeing him so treated: and yet Hund had often been seen, on small occasions, to look far more black and miserable. His face now was almost cheerful. Stiorna praised this as a sign of bravery; but the truth was, the party had been met by Rolf and Jan, going down the mountain. It was no longer possible to take Rolf for a ghost: and though Hund was as far as possible from understanding the matter, he was unspeakably relieved to find that he had not the death of his rival to answer for. It made his countenance almost gay to think of this, even while stared at by men, women, and children, as a prisoner.

"What is it?" whimpered Stiorna,—“what are you a prisoner for, Hund?”

“Ask them that know,” said Hund. “I thought at first that it was on Rolf's account; and now that they see with their own eyes that Rolf is safe, they best know what they have to bring against me.”

“It is no secret,” said Madame Erlingsen.

“Hund was seen with the pirates, acting with and assisting them, when they committed various acts of thievery on the shores of the fiord. If the pirates are taken, Hund will be tried with them for robberies at Thore’s, Kyril’s, Tank’s, and other places along the shore, about which information has been given by a witness.”

“Thore’s, Kyril’s, and Tank’s!” repeated Hund to himself; “then there must be magic in the case. I could have sworn that not an eye on earth witnessed the doings there. If Rolf turns out to be the witness, I shall be certain that he has the powers of the region to help him.”

So little is robbery to be dreaded at the seaters, that there really was no place where Hund could be fastened in;—no lock upon any door;—not a window from which he might not escape. The zealous neighbours therefore, whose interest it was to detain him, offered to take it in turn to be beside him, his right arm tied to the left of another man. And thus it was settled.

After breakfast, notice was given that the party who had travelled all night wished to repose for a few hours. All others therefore withdrew to secure quiet, some within the pine-wood; others to the nearest breezy hill, to gossip and sport; while some few took the opportunity of going home, to see after their cattle, or other domestic affairs, intending to return in the afternoon.

CHAPTER XVI.

OLD TALES AND BETTER TIDINGS.

WHEN the bishop came forth in the afternoon to take his seat in the shade of the wood, those who were there assembled were singing *For Norgé*. Instead of permitting them to stop, on account of his arrival, he joined in the song; and solely because his heart was in it. Seldom had he witnessed such a scene as this: and as he looked around him, and saw deep shades and sunny uplands, blue glaciers above, green pastures and glittering waters below; and all around, herds on every hill-side, he felt his love of old Norway, and his thankfulness for being one of her sons, as warm as that of any one of the singers in the wood. Out of the fulness of his heart, the good bishop addressed his companions on the goodness of God in creating such a land, and placing them in it, with their happiness so far in their own hands as that little worthy of being called evil could befall them, except through faults of their own. M. Kollsen, who had before uttered his complaints of the superstition of his flock, hoped that his bishop was now about to attack the mischief vigorously.

The bishop, however, only took his seat,—the mossy seat prepared for him,—and declared himself to be now at the service of any who wished to consult or converse with him. Instead of thrusting

his own opinions and reproofs upon them, as it was M. Kollsen's wont to do, he waited for the people to open their minds to him in their own way; and by this means, whatever he found occasion to say had double influence from coming naturally. The words dropped by him that day to the anxious mother awaiting the confirmation of her child,—to the young person preparing for that important event,—to the bereaved,—to the penitent,—to the thoughtless,—and to those who wondered why God had given them so many rich blessings,—what the good bishop said to all these was so fit and so welcome, that not a word was forgotten through long years after; and he was quoted half a century after he had been in his grave, as old Ulla had quoted the good bishop of Tronyem of her day.

In a few hours, many of the people were gone for the present,—some being wanted at home, and others for the expected affair on the fiord. The bishop and M. Kollsen had thought themselves alone in their shady retreat when they saw Erica lingering near among the trees. With a kind smile, the bishop beckoned to her, and bade her sit down, and tell him whether he had not been right in promising, a while ago, that God would soothe her sorrows with time, as is the plan of his kind providence. He remembered well the story of the death of her mother. Erica replied that not only had her grief been soothed, but that she was now so blessed that her heart was burdened with its gratitude. She wished,—she needed to pour out all that she felt; but M. Kollsen was there; and she could not speak quite freely before him. He, for his part, observed that, if she was now so happy, she must have given up some of her superstitions; for certainly he had never known any one less

likely to enjoy peace than Erica, on all occasions on which he had seen her,—so great was her dread of evil spirits on every hand.

“I wish,” said Erica, with a sigh,—“I do wish I knew what to think about Nipen.”

“Ay! here it comes,” observed M. Kollsen, folding his arms as if for an argument.

Encouraged by the bishop, Erica told the whole story of the last few months, from the night of Oddo’s prank to that which found her at the feet of her friend;—for she had cast herself down at the bishop’s feet, sitting as she had done in her childhood, looking up in his face.

“You want to know what I think of all this?” said the bishop, when she had done. “I think that you could hardly help believing as you have believed, amidst these strange circumstances, and with your mind full of the common accounts of Nipen. Yet I do not believe there is any such spirit as Nipen, or any demon in the forest, or on the mountain. Did you ever hear what spirits every body in this country believed in before the blessed gospel was brought to old Norway?”

“I have heard of Thor,—that yonder islet was named after; and that, when there was a tempest, with rolling thunder, such as we never hear in this region,* the people used to say it was Thor driving his chariot over the mountain-ridge.”

“That was what people said of the thunder. What they said of fire and frost was that they were giants called Loke and Thrym, who dwelt in a dreadful tempestuous place, at the end of the earth, and came abroad to do awful things among men.

* Erica knew thunder only by report, as there is none so far north as the part of Nordland where she lived. Thunder ceases at 66 degrees of latitude.

The giant Frost drove home his horses at night,—the hail-clouds that sped through the air; and there sat the giant on the frost winds, combing the manes of his horses as they went. Fire was a cunning demon that stole in where it was not wanted; and when once in, it devoured all that it chose, till it rose into the sky at last in smoke.—Then there was the giant Ægir, who brought in squalls from the sea, and made whirlpools in the fiords.”

“Why, that is like Nipen.”

“Very like Nipen;—perhaps the same. Then there was the good god Balder (the white god), who made everything bright and beautiful, and ripened the fruits of the earth. This god Balder was the sun. Then there were the three magical women, the Fates, who made men’s lives happy or miserable. Did you ever hear how these giants and Fates were worshipped before Jehovah and Christ were known in this land?”

“I have heard Ulla sing many old songs about these, and more; and how Thor and two companions as mighty as himself were travelling, and entered a curious house for the night; and wandered about in the great house, being frightened at a strange loud noise outside: and how they found in the morning that this house was the mitten of a giant infinitely greater than themselves; and that what they had taken for a separate chamber in the great house was the thumb of his mitten; and that the strange noise was the snoring of this giant Skrymir, who was asleep close by, after having pulled off his mittens.”

“That is one of the many tales belonging to the old religion of this country. And how did this old religion arise?—Why, the people saw grand spectacles every day, and heard wonders which-

ever way they turned ; and they supposed that the whole universe was alive. The sun as it travelled they thought was alive, and kind and good to men. The tempest they thought was alive, and angry with men. The fire and frost they thought were alive, pleased to make sport with men."

"As people who ought to know better," observed M. Kollsen, "now think the wind is alive, and call it Nipen, or the mist of the lake and river, which they call the sprite Uldra."

"It is true," said the bishop, "that we now have better knowledge, and see that the earth, and all that is in it, is made and moved by One Good Spirit, who, instead of sporting with men, or being angry with them, rules all things for their good. But I am not surprised that some of the old stories remain, and are believed in still,—and by good and dutiful Christians too. The mother sings the old songs over the cradle ; and the child hears tell of sprites and demons before it hears of the good God who 'sends forth the snow and rain, the hail and vapour, and the stormy winds fulfilling his word.' And when the child is grown to be a man or woman, the northern lights shooting over the sky, and the sighing of the winds in the pine-forest, bring back those old songs and old thoughts about demons and sprites ; and the stoutest man trembles. I do not wonder ; nor do I blame any man or woman for this ; though I wish they were as happy as the weakest infant, or the most worn-out old man, who has learned from the gentle Jesus to fear nothing at any time, because his Father was with him."

"But what is to be done?" asked M. Kollsen.

"The time will come," said the bishop, "when the mother will sing to her babe of the gentle Jesus ; and tell her growing child of how he loved

to be alone with his Father in the waste and howling wilderness; and bade his disciples not be afraid when there was a tempest on the wide lake. Then, when the child grows up to be a man, if he finds himself alone on the mountain or in the forest, he will think of Jesus, and fear no demon; and if a west wind and fog should overtake a woman in her boat on the fiord," he continued, looking with a smile at Erica, "she will never think of Nipen, but rather that she hears her Saviour saying, 'Why are ye afraid, O ye of little faith?'"

Erica hid her face, ashamed under the good man's smile.

"In our towns," continued he, "much of this blessed change is already wrought. No one in my city of Tronyem now fears the angry and cunning fire-giant Loke; but every citizen closes his eyes in peace, when he hears the midnight cry of the watch, 'Except the Lord keepeth the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.'* In the wilds of the country, every man's faith will hereafter be his watchman, crying out upon all that happens, 'It is the Lord's hand: let him do what seemeth to him good!' This might have been said, Erica, as it appears to me, at every turn of your story, where you and your friends were not in fault."

He went on to remark on the story she had told him; and she was really surprised to find that there was not the slightest reason to suppose that any spirit had been employed to vex and alarm her. The fog and the pirates had overtaken and frightened many in the fiord with whom Nipen had no quarrel. Rolf's imprisonment, and all the sorrows that belonged to it, had been owing to his own imprudence. The appearance of a double sun the

* The watchman's call in the towns of Norway.

night before was nothing uncommon, and was known to take place when the atmosphere was in a particular state. She herself had seen that no wood-demon had touched the axes in this very grove, last night; and that it was no mountain sprite, but a Laplander, who had taken up the first gammel cheese. She had also witnessed how absurdly mistaken Hund had been about the boat having been spirited away, and Vogel island being enchanted, and Rolf's ghost being allowed to haunt him. Here was a case before her very eyes of the way in which people with superstitious minds may misunderstand what happens to themselves.

"O!" exclaimed Erica, dropping her hands from before her glowing face, "if I dared but think there were no bad spirits,—if I dared only hope that everything that happens is done by God's own hand, I could bear everything! I would never be afraid again!"

"It is what I believe," said the bishop. Laying his hand on her head, he continued,

"We know that the very hairs of your head are all numbered. I see that you are weary of your fears,—that you have long been heavy laden with anxiety. It is you then that he invites to trust him when he says by the lips of Jesus, 'Come ye that are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.'"

"Rest,—rest is what I have wanted," said Erica, while her tears flowed gently; "but Peder and Ulla did not believe as you do, and could not explain things; and——"

"You should have asked me," said M. Kollsen; "I could have explained everything."

"Perhaps so, sir: but—but, M. Kollsen, you always seemed angry; and you said you despised us for believing anything that you did not: and it

is the most difficult thing in the world to ask questions which one knows will be despised."

M. Kollsen glanced in the bishop's face, to see how he took this, and how he meant to support the pastor's authority. The bishop looked sad, and said nothing.

"And then," continued Erica, "there were others who laughed:—even Rolf himself laughed: and what one fears becomes only the more terrible when it is laughed at."

"Very true," said the bishop. "When Jesus sat on the well in Samaria, and taught how the true worship was come, he neither frowned on the woman who inquired, nor despised her, nor made light of her superstition about a sacred mountain."

There was a long silence, which was broken at last by Erica asking the bishop whether he could not console poor Hund, who wanted comfort more than she had ever done. The bishop replied that the demons who most tormented poor Hund were not abroad on the earth or in the air, but within his breast:—his remorse, his envy, his covetousness, his fear. He meant, however, not to lose sight of poor Hund, either in the prison to which he was to travel to-morrow, or after he should come out of it.

Here Frolich appeared running to ask whether those who were in the grove would not like to look forth from the ridge, and see what good the budstick had done, and how many parties were on their way, from all quarters, to the farm.

M. Kollsen was glad to rise and escape from what he thought a schooling; and the bishop himself was as interested in what was going on as if the farm had been his home. He was actually the first at the ridge.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE WATCH ON THE HILL.

THIS part of the mountain was a singularly favourable situation for seeing what was doing on the spot on which every one's attention was fixed this day. While the people on the fiord could not see what was going forward at Saltdalen, nor those at Saltdalen what were the movements at the farm, the watchers on the ridge could observe the proceedings at all the three points. The opportunity was much improved by the bishop having a glass;—a glass of a quality so rare at that time, that there would probably have been some talk of magic and charms, if it had been seen in Olaf's hands, instead of the bishop's.

By means of this glass, the bishop, M. Kollsen, or Madame Erlingsen announced, from time to time, what was doing, as the evening advanced;—how parties of two or three were leaving Saltdalen, creeping towards the farm under cover of rising grounds, rocks, and pine-woods; how small companies, well armed, were hidden in every place of concealment near Erlingsen's; and how there seemed to be a great number of women about the place. This was puzzling. Who these women could be, and why they should choose to resort to the farm when its female inhabitants had left it for safety, it was difficult at first to imagine. But the

truth soon occurred to Frolich. . . . No doubt some one had remembered how strange and suspicious it would appear to the pirates, who supposed the bishop to be at the farm, that there should be no women in the company assembled to meet him. No doubt, these people in blue, white, and green petticoats, who were striding about the yards, and looking forth from the galleries, were men dressed in their wives' clothes, or in such as Erlingsen furnished from the family chests. This disguise was as good as an ambush, while it also served to give the place the festive appearance looked for by the enemy. It was found afterwards that Oddo had acted as lady's-maid, fitting the gowns to the shortest men, and dressing up their heads, so as best to hide the shaggy hair. Great numbers were certainly assembled before night; yet still a little group might be seen now and then, winding down from some recess of the wide-spreading mountain, making circuits by the ravines and water-courses, so as to avoid crossing the upland slopes, which the pirates might be surveying by means of such a glass as the bishop's.

The bishop was of opinion that scarcely a blow would be struck, so great was the country force compared with that of the pirates. He believed that the enemy would be overpowered and disarmed, almost without a struggle. Erica, who could not but tremble with fear as well as expectation, blessed his words in her heart: and so, in truth, did every woman present.

No one thought of going to rest, though Madame Erlingsen urged it upon those over whom she had influence. Finding that Erica had sat up to watch the cattle the night before, she compelled her to

go and lie down: but no compulsion could make her sleep; and Orga and Frolich did the best they could for her, by running to her with news of any fresh appearance below. Just after midnight they brought her word that the bishop had ordered every one but M. Kollsen away from the ridge. The schooner had peeped out from behind the promontory, and was stealing up with a soft west wind.

“A west wind!” exclaimed Erica. “Any fog?”

“No, not a flake of mist. Neither you nor any one will say that Nipen is favourable to the enemy to-night, Erica.”

“You will hear me say less of Nipen henceforward,” said Erica.

“That is wise for to-night, at least. Here is the west wind; but only to waft the enemy into our hands. But have you really left off believing in Nipen, and the whole race of sprites?”

These words jarred on Erica's yet timid feelings. She replied that she must take time for thought, as she had much to think about: but the bishop had to-day spoken words which she believed would, when well considered, lift a heavy load from her heart.

The girls kindly left this impression undisturbed, and went on to describe how the schooner was working up, and why the bishop thought that the people at the farm were aware of every inch of her progress.

Erica sprang from the bed, and joined the group who were sitting on the grass, awaiting the sunrise, and eagerly listening for every word from their watchman, the bishop. He told when he saw two boats full of men put off from the schooner, and

creep towards Erlingsen's cove under the shadow of the rocks. He told how the country-people immediately gathered behind the barn and the house, and every outbuilding; and at length, when the boats touched the shore, he said,

“Now come and look yourselves. They are too busy now to be observing us.”

Then how eyes were strained, and what silence there was, broken only by an occasional exclamation, as it became certain that the decisive moment was come! The glass passed rapidly from hand to hand; but it revealed little. There was smoke, covering a struggling crowd: and such gazers as had a husband, a father, or a lover there, could look no longer. The bishop himself did not attempt to comfort them, at a moment when he knew it would be in vain.

In the midst of all this, some one observed two boats appearing from behind the promontory, and making directly and rapidly for the schooner; and presently there was a little smoke there too; only a puff or two; and then all was quiet till she began to hang out her sails, which had been taken in, and to glide over the waters in the direction of a small sandy beach, on which she ran straight up, till she was evidently fast grounded.

“Excellent!” exclaimed M. Kollsen. “How admirably they are conducting the whole affair! The retreat of these fellows is completely cut off,—their vessel taken, and driven ashore, while they are busy elsewhere.

“That is Oddo's doings,” observed Orga, quietly.

“Oddo's doings! How do you know? Are you serious? Can you see? Or did you hear?”

“I was by when Oddo told his plan to my

father, and begged to be allowed to take the schooner. My father laughed so that I thought Oddo would be for going over to the enemy."

"No fear of that," said Erica. "Oddo has a brave, faithful heart."

"And," said his mistress, "a conscience and temper which will keep him meek and patient till he has atoned for mischief that he thinks he has done."

"I must see more of this boy," observed the bishop. "Did your father grant his request?" he inquired of Orga.

"At last he did. Oddo said that a young boy could do little good in the fight at the farm; but that he might lead a party to attack the schooner, in the absence of almost all her crew. He said it was no more than a boy might do, with half a dozen lads to help him; for he had reason to feel sure that only just hands enough to manage her would be left on board: and those the weakest of the pirate-party. My father said there were men to spare; and he put twelve, well armed, under Oddo's orders."

"Who would submit to be under Oddo's command?" asked Frolich, laughing at the idea.

"Twice twelve, if he had wanted so many," replied Orga. "Between the goodness of the joke and their zeal, there were volunteers in plenty,—my father told me, as he was putting me on my horse."

In a very few minutes, all signs of fighting were over at the farm. But there was a fire. The barn was seen to smoke and then to flame. It was plain that the neighbours were at liberty to attend to the fire, and had no fighting on their hands. They

were seen to form a line from the burning barn to the brink of the water, and to hand buckets till the fire was out. The barn had been nearly empty; and the fire did not spread farther; so that Madame Erlingsen herself did not spend one grudging thought on this small sacrifice, in return for their deliverance from the enemy, who, she had feared, would ransack her dwelling, and fire it over her children's heads. She was satisfied and thankful, if indeed the pirates were taken.

At the bishop's question about who would go down the mountain for news, each of Hund's guards begged to be the man. The swiftest of foot was chosen; and off he went,—not without a barley-cake and brandy-flask,—at a pace which promised speedy tidings.

As Madame Erlingsen hoped in her heart, he met a messenger despatched by her husband; so that all who had lain down to sleep,—all but herself, that is,—were greeted by good news as they appeared at the breakfast-table. The pirates were all taken, and on their way, bound, to Saltdalen, there to be examined by the magistrate, and, no doubt, thence transferred to the jail at Tronyem. Hund was to follow immediately, either to take his trial with them, or to appear as evidence against them.

One of the pirates was wounded, and two of the country people; but not a life was lost; and Erlingsen, Rolf, Peder, and Oddo were all safe and unhurt.

Oddo was superintending the unlading of the schooner, and was appointed by the magistrate, at his master's desire, head-guard of the property, as it lay on the beach, till the necessary evidence of

its having been stolen by the pirates was taken, and the owners could be permitted to identify and resume their property. Oddo was certainly the greatest man concerned in the affair, after Erlingsen. And like a really great man, Oddo's head was not turned with his importance, but intent on the perfect discharge of his office. When it was finished, and he returned to his home, he found he cared more for the pressure of his grandfather's hand upon his head, as the old man blessed his boy, than for all the praises of the whole country round.

CHAPTER XVIII.

TO CHURCH.

AN idea occurred to everybody but one, within the next few hours, which occasioned some consultation. Everybody but Erica felt and said that it would be a great honour and privilege, but one not undeserved by the district, for the bishop of Tronyem to marry Rolf and Erica before he left Nordland. The bishop wished to make some acknowledgment for the zealous protection and hospitality which had been afforded him; and he soon found that no act would be so generally acceptable as his blessing the union of these young people. He spoke to Madame Erlingsen about it: and her only doubt was whether it was not too soon after the burial of old Ulla. If Peder, however, should not object on this ground, no one else had a right to do so.

So far from objecting, Peder shed tears of pleasure at the thought. He was sure Ulla would be delighted, if she knew;—would feel it an honour to herself that her place should be filled by one whose marriage-crown should be blessed by the bishop himself. Erica was startled, and had several good reasons to give why there should be no hurry: but she was brought round to see that Rolf could go to Tronyem, to give his evidence against the pirates, even better after his marriage than before,

because he would leave Peder in a condition of greater comfort: and she even smiled to herself as she thought how rapidly she might improve the appearance of the house during his absence, so that he should delight in it on his return. When the bishop assured her that she should not be hurried into her marriage within two days, but that he would appoint a day and hour when he should be at the distant church, to confirm the young people resident lower down the fiord, she gratefully consented, wondering at the interest so high and revered a man seemed to feel in her lot. When it was once settled that the wedding was to be next week, she gave hearty aid to the preparations, as freely and openly as if she was not herself to be the bride.

The bishop embarked immediately on descending the mountain. His considerate eye saw, at a glance, that there was necessarily much confusion at the farm, and that his further presence would be an inconvenience. So he bade his host and the neighbours farewell for a short time, desiring them not to fail to meet him again at the church, on his summons.

The kindness of the neighbours did not cease when danger from the enemy was over. Some offered boats for the wedding procession; several sent gilt paper to adorn the bridal crown which Orga and Frolich were making; and some yielded a more important assistance still. They put trusty persons into the seater, and over the herd, for two days; so that all Erlingsen's household might be at the wedding. Stiorna preferred making butter, and gazing southwards, to attending the wedding of Hund's rival; but every one else was glad to

go. Nobody would have thought of urging Peder's presence; but he chose to do his part—(a part which no one could discharge so well),—singing bridal songs in the leading boat.

The summons arrived quite as soon as it could have been looked for; and the next day there was as pretty a boat-procession on the still waters of the fiord as had ever before glided over its surface. Within the memory of man, no bride had been prettier,—no crown more glittering,—no bridegroom more happy;—no chanting was ever more soothing than old Peder's,—no clarionet better played than Oddo's,—no bridesmaids more gay and kindly than Orga and Frolich. The neighbours were hearty in their cheers as the boats put off; and the cheers were repeated from every settlement in the coves and on the heights of the fiord, and were again taken up by the echoes, till the summer air seemed to be full of gladness. The birds of the islands, and the leaping fish, might perhaps wonder as the train of bowery boats floated down;—for every boat was dressed with green boughs and garlands of flowers;—but the matter was understood and rejoiced in by all others.

To conclude, the bishop was punctual, and kindly in his welcome of Erica to the altar. He was also graciously pleased with Rolf's explanation that he had not ventured to bring a gift for so great a dignitary; but that he hoped the bishop would approve of his giving his humble offering to the church instead. The six sides of the new pulpit were nearly finished now; and Rolf desired to take upon himself the carving of the basement, as his marriage-fee. As the bishop smiled approbation, M. Kollsen bowed acquiescence; and Rolf found

himself in prospect of indoor work for some time to come.

Erica carried home in her heart, and kept there for ever, certain words of the bishop's address, which he uttered with his eye kindly fixed upon hers. "Go, and abide under the shadow of the Almighty. So shall you not be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day, nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. When you shall have made the Lord your habitation, you shall not fear that evil may befall you, or that any plague shall come nigh your dwelling. Go : and peace be on your house !"

THE END.





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